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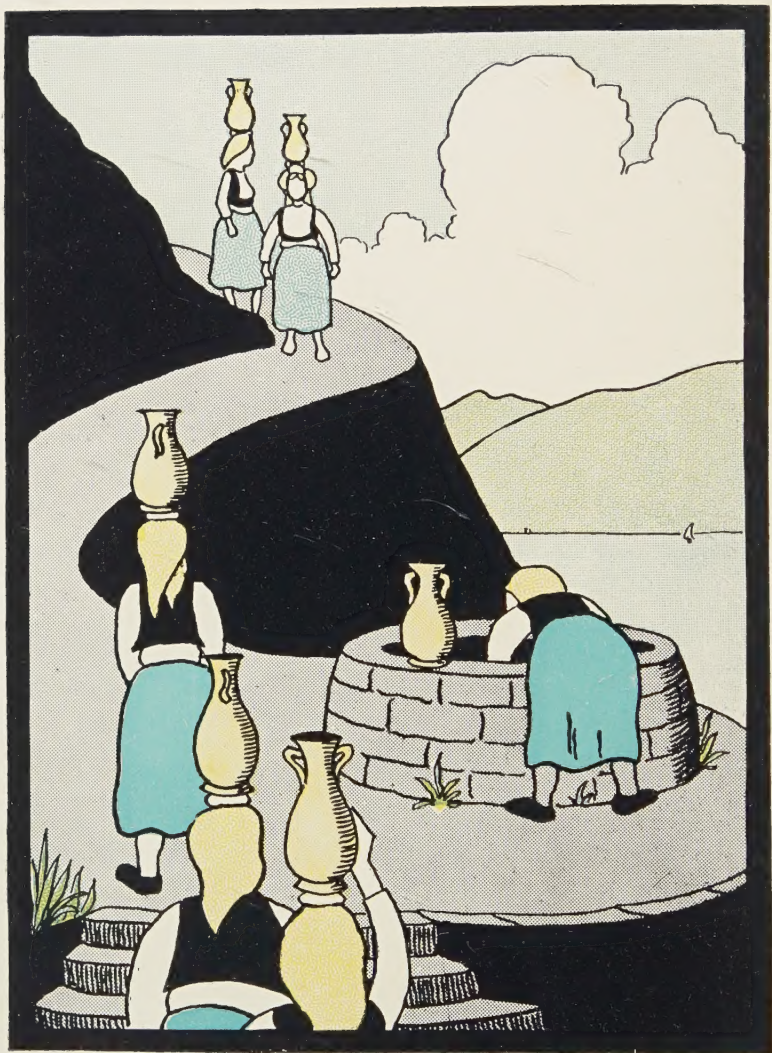
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TO THE LAND OF
THE EAGLE



WOMEN AT THE WELL

[Frontispiece.]

TO THE LAND OF THE EAGLE

Travels in Montenegro and Albania

BY

PAUL EDMONDS

Author of Peacocks and Pagodas

WITH SEVENTY-THREE BLACK-AND-WHITE
ILLUSTRATIONS AND A FRONTISPIECE IN
COLOUR BY THE AUTHOR, AND TWO MAPS

LONDON

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1927

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TO
F.S.E.
WHOSE KINDNESS MADE THIS
BOOK POSSIBLE.

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TO THE LAND OF THE EAGLE

CHAPTER I

Tourist and Traveller—Balkan Hospitality—The Rock Garden of Eastern Europe—Arrival in Venice—A Rough Crossing—Fiume—Through the Porthole—The "Domineering Cathedral"—A Town in a Palace—The Bocche di Cattaro—A Polyglot Russian—Church Parade—A Curious River.

WHAT is the difference between the tourist and the traveller? According to some it is merely a matter of comfort—the tourist considering comfort essential, the traveller disregarding it entirely. But while this is true as far as it goes, actually the difference is more deeply rooted and more vital. The tourist travels for amusement, the traveller because of some urge within him that cannot be resisted. The tourist, as a rule, follows the beaten track, the traveller prefers to avoid it. The preoccupations of the tourist are scenery, cathedrals, museums, picture galleries and so forth. The traveller, while by no means blind to fine scenery, regards it as an incident. He is more interested in people than in scenery, and he considers the physical characteristics of a country chiefly as they affect the mentality of the inhabitants, in much the same way as he regards their cathedrals, their public monuments, their domestic architecture, their pictures and works of art, more

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in relation to the history, development, and character of the people than for their own particular beauty or interest.

I have heard British tourists abroad refer contemptuously to the inhabitants of the country through which they were passing as "foreigners". No real traveller would be guilty of such a lapse. He knows that he is the guest of the people in whose country he is travelling, and he behaves accordingly. He tries to keep an open mind, and is not continually either disparaging the country and comparing its ways unfavourably with his own, or decrying certain customs of his native land and comparing them unfavourably with others abroad. Both types of tourist are common, and are typified by the two hackneyed questions "Why is it that one can never get a decent cup of tea in this confounded country?", and, on the other hand, "This coffee is the best I have tasted. Why on earth can't one get coffee like this at home?"

The true way to learn about a country when travelling in it is to live as far as possible as the natives do, though I am aware that this is a counsel of perfection, and often difficult or impracticable. In most European countries, however, it may be done, especially in those semi-Oriental lands where hospitality is still almost a religion, and where a man is bound to shelter and feed any passing traveller who crosses his threshold, even if that traveller should happen to be his mortal enemy. This law holds good throughout the Balkans, and the less civilised the place the more literally the law is honoured. I had experience of it myself in Montenegro,

Balkan Hospitality

and should have had it also, no doubt, in Albania, if I had had less of the tourist and more of the traveller in my composition, and had not, moreover, felt some qualms about accepting hospitality from people who, though extremely poor, were proud enough to resent the offer of any payment. The latter difficulty could, perhaps, be overcome by making presents in kind—tobacco, for instance—or by small gifts of money to the children of the house, and I think it would be possible for a young and active man to travel on foot through most of the Balkan countries without staying at inns, and at an almost nominal expense.

One need not, however, be a traveller in the widest sense of the term to visit Dalmatia and the Eastern Adriatic Coast. For here will be found hotels and other accommodation good enough to satisfy the tourist who does not demand the height of luxury. The boats which ply down the coast are comfortable, and the charges are moderate. Trieste, the usual starting-point, is easily accessible from London, and the journey only involves one night in the train. The scenery is fine and varied. There are many beautiful architectural relics to be seen, such as the great colosseum at Pola, and the palace of Diocletian at Spalato. Ragusa, with its ancient city walls and battlements, its olive and cypress-clad hills; Cattaro, amidst the limestone mountains that buttress Montenegro; Antivari, Durazzo, Valona, and other Balkan ports; and finally Corfu with its orange and lemon groves, its marvellous views, its colour, and its wild-flowers, are all awaiting the tourist who has sufficient

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initiative to push on just a little beyond the ordinary tourist routes.

Many have the will to travel but, alas, lack the opportunity. Business ties, family ties, circumstances of all kinds conspire to keep them at home. Their solaces are the travel lecture, the travel film, and the travel book, and it is chiefly to them that I am addressing this account of my wanderings in what may be called "The Rock Garden of Eastern Europe". They will forgive—whatever the superior person may say or think—the inclusion of many minor details of travel which to some may seem dull and irrelevant but which are, in fact, an inseparable part of the traveller's daily life, and without which the traveller's journal would lose much of its realism and its actuality.

I may perhaps add that those particulars which relate to the cost of travel, and to the accommodation available in some of the places I visited, have been included for the benefit of any readers who may be tempted to go and see this delightful corner of Europe for themselves. I hope they may be many.

And now for my narrative.

Late one night in early April I arrived at Venice. A gondola received me, and I experienced once again the never-failing thrill of the mysterious progress through narrow waterways, under black bridges, over the shimmering Grand Canal, past streets illuminated by dim lamps where dark-clad figures hurried to and fro, past open windows whence came the strains of gramophone or piano, through

Arrival in Venice

dark, vault-like canaletti silent but for the rhythmic sound of the great oar at my back, and finally to the water entrance of the hotel. The tide was high, I remember, and the steps were awash. The gondolier gave the bell a tug and its noise awoke the echoes. A footstep became audible, and a porter arrived bearing a plank by means of which I achieved the hotel dryshod. My luggage followed me. Then with a smiling "Buona sera, signore," the gondolier departed. The heavy door was closed with a clang and my journey from London was at an end.

My intention was to go from Venice to Fiume, and take a boat from there instead of from Trieste. I hardly know why except that I had found Trieste rather a dull place on a previous visit and thought that Fiume might prove more interesting. Also I expected to enjoy the sea voyage—an expectation not quite fully realised, as it turned out. But enquiries at the various tourist agencies in Venice elicited no information about boats down the Adriatic Coast from Fiume. All the boats went, I was assured, from Trieste. It was not the least use going to Fiume. I must travel on to Trieste by train and pick up a Lloyd-Triestino boat from there. So they said: but I was sceptical about this and suspected that the agencies were grinding the axe of the Lloyd-Triestino Company, which, whatever its excellences, is not the only company that carries passengers down the Dalmatian coast. I therefore took the risk of ignoring the warnings I had received, and booked a passage to Fiume by sea. In the end I found I had done right.

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I shall never forget the morning of my departure. It was about six a.m. when I literally waded across the Piazza past the great doors of San Marco, followed by my baggage, in the charge of a disgruntled porter from the hotel. The rain was descending in a solid mass, and the Piazza was almost ankle-deep in water. The Fiume boat lay only a short distance from the quay where the gondolas congregate, but though so near it was almost obliterated by the mist and driving rain. A gondola was just putting off, and I entered it. Some other passengers, also bound for the Fiume boat, were crouching under the black cover and contriving to keep comparatively dry, but the gondoliers and myself, outside, were exposed to the full force of the down-pour. We were consequently anxious to lose no time in reaching the gangway of the steamer. But just as we were within grasp of it another boat got in our way and caused us to be swept down some distance by the heavy tide that was running, and the exertions necessary to regain the lost position were so great that our gondoliers had no breath left with which to anathematise the authors of the trouble. I much regretted this, as the Venetian gondolier is a past master of the art of vituperation.

Eventually, in various stages of wetness, we got on board, and, after a crossing which caused many of the passengers intense anguish, reached Pola. Later the same evening we arrived at Fiume.

Fiume, as everyone knows, was annexed by Italy after the coup by Gabriele D'Annunzio. This coup—one of the straws

Fiume

which show only too clearly in which direction the wind of Italian foreign policy is blowing—was in reality not much less than bare-faced robbery, and one cannot help wondering why it caused so little outcry. Whilst I was in Fiume I met a resident Englishman at a café and asked him if he could tell me what the inhabitants thought about it and whether they were satisfied with the new condition of affairs or the reverse.

“My dear fellow,” said he, “there is no such thing as freedom of speech either here or elsewhere in Italy. It is impossible to find out what they think. No one dares utter a word.”

And with this I had to be content.

As Fiume did not appear to offer much inducement for a long stay, I soon began to make enquiries about a boat and discovered that a Jugo-Slav steamer was due to leave in the evening. I was further told that a *carozza* would be necessary to get my baggage and myself down to the boat and that the charge would be 25 liras. As the hotel was on the water-front and not much more than a stone's throw from the wharf, this caused me some surprise. But in spite of my protestations a *carozza* was brought and my suitcases were deposited in it. There seemed no alternative but to get in also. The driver whipped up his sorry steed and we rattled away over the cobblestones, and before long arrived at a bridge bristling with soldiers and officials of various kinds. The *carozza* was stopped, my passport was demanded, I was questioned in several languages,

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and my suitcases were taken down and opened, and I realised that I was about to cross the frontier into Jugo-Slavia. It seems that the Italians, having seized Fiume, allowed the Slavs to retain the suburb of Susak and a small section of the port—very much like a penny given as a consolation to a small boy by someone who has taken his shilling. So when, after a roundabout journey amongst wharves and docks, we at last reached the steamer, I found myself within hailing distance of the hotel which I had left half-an-hour before, but a high wall and a great barrier of barbed wire entirely separated the Italian side from the Jugo-Slav side of the pier. Hence the necessity for the *carozza* and the 25 liras I had paid so unwillingly.

I bought my ticket at a little wooden shack and, having no Serbian money, tendered a 1,000-lira note. This caused consternation, and there was much searching in drawers and much turning out of pockets, before the necessary change could be found. There was also a good deal of head-scratching and calculation on odd pieces of paper. At last, however, I was presented with my ticket and a bundle of Serbian notes and went on board the boat. An hour later, just as we were starting, I was interviewing the steward in the saloon about dinner when in rushed the ticket man, agitated and voluble. He had made a mess of his calculation and given me the wrong change—several hundred dinars too much!

I was allotted a berth in a four-berth cabin and spent that night in great discomfort owing to the local custom

Through the Porthole

of keeping the porthole tightly shut. The other occupants snored peacefully. Carbonic acid gas seemed to suit their lungs quite as well as oxygen. I waited, the next morning, with what patience I could until the three men left the cabin (incidentally all had slept in their clothes), and then flung open the porthole and let in a stream of glorious air. The view through the circular window was most beautiful. A town of white and ochre houses, crowned by a fine old fortress, ran down to the water's edge. Behind the town rose a steep hill, almost dead white in the brilliant morning light. The sea, blue as only the Adriatic can be, glittered and shimmered in slowly-moving ripples. The sun shone from a cloudless sky. And only a few days before I had been shivering in an English March. The change was almost incredible.

Sebenico, which was the name of the town (Sibenik in Slav), has 30,000 inhabitants, and is situated at the mouth of a river which rejoices in the name of Krka. (The Serbian language is economical of vowels and possesses many words that consist entirely of consonants ; the word Serb itself is spelt Srb.) According to my guide-book, Sebenico is a good tourist centre. I did not go ashore, but contented myself with attempting a sketch from the boat. Although the sketch brought in what the guide-book describes as the " domineering cathedral ", it conveyed nothing of what the place looked like on that brilliant and shining spring morning. Indeed, no picture could.

The boat moved quietly on amongst the various islands

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that dot the Dalmatian coast. It was seldom that we had any glimpse of the open sea. These islands, like the mainland hereabouts, seem stony and barren. Only at rare intervals are there signs of cultivation, and, although the ground has been terraced for gardens or vineyards at some more or less remote period, only dwarf pine and oak scrub and occasionally a few olives now relieve the monotony of the limestone.

This description may suggest that the scenery is dull and uninteresting. It was not so at the time of which I am writing, though perhaps this may have been due to the superb weather with which our trip was favoured.

I had naturally expected the boat to stop at Zara, the capital of Dalmatia, and was considerably surprised to discover that we had passed the place without putting in. It seems that Zara belongs to Italy, though one wonders what claim Italy can possibly have to the capital town of Dalmatia, or by what right she can forbid Jugo-Slav boats entrance to the port. I was told, I admit, that the population of Zara is almost entirely Italian and that this is the ground of Italy's claim. But that is as may be.

We left Sebenico when the day was still young, probably at about seven o'clock in the morning, and arrived at Spalato early in the afternoon. I had made friends with a very pleasant English couple on the boat, and as we were told that we were stopping at Spalato for five hours we went ashore together to explore the town. The old portion occupies the ancient palace of the Emperor Diocletian and is on this

A Town in a Palace

account unique. Nowhere else, as far as I am aware, is a similar state of things to be found. Other towns have no doubt been built on the sites of ancient palaces and around ancient palaces. But Spalato—at least, the older part of it—is actually contained inside the palace walls. These outer walls, massive and solid, are still to a large extent intact. There used to be four gates, the golden gate (*porta aurea*), the silver gate (*porta argentea*), the bronze gate (*porta aenea*), and the iron gate (*porta ferrea*). Now there are only three, the silver gate having disappeared. Of these, the golden gate is the largest and most imposing. It is in the centre of the North wall on the side farthest from the sea. If the original doors were of gold, they have vanished long since. The archway, elaborately decorated and with the great wall towering above, is all that now remains. The bronze gate—a narrow arched passage leading from the waterfront—the iron gate on the west side, and the golden gate on the north, are to this day the only means of ingress and egress.

The streets are exceedingly narrow, tortuous and picturesque. In most places people could, if they wanted to, shake hands across the street from opposite windows. At every turn there is something to arrest notice or please the eye; here an old doorway, filled in with masonry but with columns, capitals, and arches intact; there a scrap of old carving, perhaps a representation of a pagan god, or, if of later date, a saint or an effigy of the Madonna and Child. Patches of old Roman brickwork are visible there and there,

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and pieces of masonry of great age are now incorporated into the walls of modern, or comparatively modern, houses.

On the south wall traces still remain of the magnificent series of arches which formed the façade of the palace. These arches are now filled in, and rows of shuttered windows of the ordinary dwelling-house type appear between them. This was the front of the palace, and the sea in those days reached to the wall itself. Whether it has receded, or whether the building of a road and a quay has pushed it back I do not know, but it reaches the wall no longer.

The western front possesses four towers. They are not now very noticeable, as they have been built into new houses. Three of the main corner towers of the palace still survive, the fourth was destroyed in the sixteenth century.

The Mausoleum of Diocletian remains intact—or very nearly so—and is used, as it has been used for more than a thousand years, as the cathedral of Spalato. It is octagonal in form, with a peripteros of twenty-four columns. Originally the sarcophagus of the Emperor stood in the centre beneath the dome.

Outside the cathedral is a peristyle, a small flagged square with sixteen columns in a remarkable state of preservation; there is also a sphinx of black marble which is said to have been brought from the tomb of the Egyptian king Thothmes III (15th century B.C.). A few yards up a narrow alley-way stands a little temple of Jupiter, solidly built and massive. It contains some old sarcophagi and a

A Town in a Palace

large stone font and has at some period served as a baptistry.

The palace, as first designed, must have been a magnificent building. Fortunately enough remains to give a sufficiently accurate idea of its form and details. It was built between A.D. 295 and A.D. 305.

Diocletian was born in Salona, a town not far from Spalato, where excavations have in recent years brought to light Roman remains of much historic and artistic value. He abdicated after twenty years' reign and retired to his palace, which he occupied until his death in 313. In the year 424 Galla Placida, daughter of the Emperor Theodosius, was exiled in the palace. In 461 Marcellinus proclaimed himself King of Dalmatia. In 474 the Emperor Glycerius, driven from the throne by Julius Nepos, took refuge in the palace, afterwards becoming bishop of Salona. After this Julius Nepos himself came to the palace and proclaimed himself king. He was murdered later by two of his own courtiers. In 615 Salona was destroyed by the Avars and the inhabitants were driven to the islands for refuge. Subsequently, the Slavs having succeeded to the Avars, the exiles returned and settled in the palace, thus founding the town of Spalato. Such, in brief, is the history.

This unique and remarkable town contains at the present time 265 houses, and shelters a population of 3,000 persons.

We reached Gravosa early the next morning. As my friends were leaving the boat there, I got up to say good-bye, and was rewarded by bright sunshine and a delightful

To the Land of the Eagle

walk before breakfast amongst olives and cypresses on the hillside above the harbour. Gravosa is the stopping place for Ragusa and connected with it by tram, but I did not attempt to go to Ragusa on this occasion for fear of missing the boat. We had a magnificent view of it, however, as we steamed past close inshore on our way to Cattaro. It looked an exceedingly beautiful place and I resolved to visit it on my return.

An hour or so later we entered the Bocche di Cattaro, an inlet or fiord of considerable size, with limestone mountains bold and rugged, running down sheer to the water. Villages dotted the edge of the inlet, and there were islands here and there, one boasting a chapel with a bright red roof—a pleasant note of colour against the grey of the mountain-side.

At Castelnuovo—a steeply-rising town crowned by an old castle—a respectable-looking old man came aboard selling newspapers. As it appeared to be a matter of indifference to him what language he spoke, I ascertained without difficulty that he was a Russian refugee, at one time a rich man, but now hard put to it to earn a livelihood. If persistence constitutes a good salesman he ought to be one of the best. He landed me with some exceedingly expensive picture postcards and some newspapers which I couldn't read.

The town of Cattaro lies at the extreme end of the inlet with mount Lovcen (1,759 metres) towering above it. It is almost completely shut in by mountains, and in the winter

The Bocche di Cattaro

can get but little sunshine. At the season of the year about which I am writing it is, however, sunny enough, and in the height of summer must be exceedingly hot. It is an old walled town whose ancient ramparts climb zigzag up the mountainside and culminate in an old ruined fort. One enters the town from the *riva* by a gateway dating from the Venetian conquest, as shown by the winged lion of St Mark carved in relief upon it. In the passageway beneath is a rude representation of the Madonna and Child with figures of saints on either side. This I should ascribe to a very much earlier period than the Venetian. Within the gate is a small piazza with an old clock tower. Beyond the piazza are narrow stone-paved streets like those of Spalato.

I found quarters in a quaint hostelry, shut in by houses and approached by streets a few feet in width, calling itself the Hotel Graz. A small terrace at the entrance on which stood some plants and a palm or two in tubs allowed a modicum of light and air to reach the house. The arrangements within were primitive. On the landing outside the room allotted to me a woman was ironing linen, and as the only light that reached her came through the door of my room this had to be left open. I comforted myself with the reflection that ironing could not go on for ever.

I was aroused the next morning by the ringing of church bells, or rather the painful tintinnabulation which serves the purpose in this part of the world. It was Easter Day. Outside in the piazza the townsfolk had gathered, dressed in their best and smartest clothes. In the square by the

To the Land of the Eagle

double-towered *duomo* a regiment of Serbian infantry was drawn up for church parade, while a martial tramp from the distance spoke of other troops on their way there also. Strains of military music became audible above the din of the bells, and a band came round the corner—clarinets, brass instruments, a small drum and a big drum. The big drum was mounted on a carriage and pulled along by a boy. The drummer—a fine and imposing fellow, as all big-drummers ought to be—marched behind and administered sounding thwacks (to the drum, not to the boy). The music was one of the stereotyped kind played by most brass bands, and was full of the commonplaces one has come to associate with this particular class of music. In fact, Serbian music does not differ much from our own as far as the military band is concerned. I have heard Serbian soldiers, though, singing the folk-songs of the country as they march, and these I thought good, rousing, rhythmic tunes, almost as far removed from the brass band twaddle as is the Londonderry Air from “ Yes, we have no bananas ”.

While the townsfolk and the military were in church I wandered through the back portion of the little town and emerged by another old gateway in the ramparts on to a bridge. This gateway still possesses the pulley-wheels which at some time served as part of the mechanism of a draw-bridge, though now the bridge is a fixture and cannot be raised. Above the gateway on the outside another Venetian lion is carved, and on either side of the lion is an inscription.

A Curious River

That on the left runs :— And that on the right :—

AUGUST 15TH,
1539. THE
FLEET OF THE
TURKS WAS
DEFEATED

DIE XV
AUGUSTI
MDXXXIX
TVRCHARUM
CLASSIS
REPULSA FUIT

DIE XXV
MARTII
MDXL
CONSTRUCTA
FUIT
HÆC PORTA

MARCH 25TH,
1540. THIS
GATE WAS
BUILT

A short distance above the bridge the mountain presented a solid surface of rock. In spite of this a stream of considerable volume flowed beneath the bridge. Whence it came was a mystery. I crossed the bridge and, walking along the bank for perhaps a hundred yards, found a wide bed of pebbles and shingle—perfectly dry. In the middle of this bed the river started—started out of nothing and from nowhere—yet less than a hundred and fifty yards below this point the water was pouring over a weir with the resounding roar of a river in full flood. It was a remarkable phenomenon.

CHAPTER II

The Cattaro Market—Local Costume—The "Posta"—Fellow Sufferers—The Njegus Kavana—An Amazing Panorama—Outlaws—Posta-Sickness—The Hotel Jadran—An Unexpected Discovery—A British Breakfast—White Cetinje—Off On Tramp—The Plain of Ljubotin—A Montenegrin Welcome—In a Montenegrin Homestead—A Bedroom Supper—I Share a Bed with the Consul—Sheets and the British Army—Home Again.



MONTENEGRIN GIRL

To those who use their eyes a market can give a great deal of information. A market is, in effect, an epitome of the life of the folk who frequent it, and from the produce exposed for sale it is not difficult to form a fairly accurate estimate of the daily occupations of the people of the district, of the domestic conditions under which they live, and of their wealth or their poverty as the case may be. The essential factors, apart from housing, are food, clothing, and fuel, and these are usually the principal commodities on sale. The market at Cattaro offered, I found, one exception to this rule—it contained no clothing or any kind of cloth or fabric. Neither were there shoes or any other footwear to be bought there, but only raw-hide cut into convenient shapes for fashioning the home-made shoes which are worn, I think, throughout the Balkans. These are of the Turkish type—a raw-hide sole

The Cattaro Market

turned up at the toe, with uppers of open-work made of fine white cord or twine. They are called "upankas."

Fuel was represented on the edge of the jetty by a row of blackened sacks which flopped about in the irresponsible and rather humorous way that full sacks do. They contained charcoal, and their owners—black-clothed peasant women—stood behind them on the look-out for buyers. On my



CHARCOAL SELLERS, CATTARO

approach they began all talking at once to urge upon me the superior value of their individual sacks, and showed much disappointment when I shook my head and uttered the only Serbian word I then knew—"Engleski" (Englishman). Facing the water—for the Cattaro market is on the *riva* outside the city walls—sat a number of other women, and a few men, with their little assortments of produce beside them. Behind towered the great rampart of the old citadel. Oranges struck a note of bright colour. Bundles of enormous leeks shone smoothly in the sun. Green lettuce leaves,

To the Land of the Eagle

dandelion leaves, and many other leaves which I could not name, were displayed on pieces of sacking—evidently the inhabitants of Cattaro do not lack for vitamins. There were round, white, country cheeses, strings of figs, baskets of black olives, oil in gourds, potatoes and various vegetables. In the part of the market devoted to fish I saw a number of carp, some dried sprats or sardines, and some mussels—no great quantity, but enough to make the atmosphere little inducement to linger. In the meat department goat and mutton were predominant, both in the living and the dead state. The live kids tied up to posts outside were the most fascinating baby things imaginable, and so were the lambs—white, woolly, and adorable. One thought of mint sauce with a shudder.

Although it was a bright sunny morning there did not seem to be much colour. This was partly due to the sombreness of the peasant dress. Black was largely worn, just as it is in Italy. Otherwise the tones of the clothing were grey, faded brown, and the pleasant but inconspicuous shade of blue which the cotton overall of the peasant acquires after many washings. The headgear was the most characteristic part of the dress, as, in fact, it usually is everywhere. Here, as in Montenegro, it consisted of a flat, round, brimless cap, and was worn by both men and women. The red, or crimson, top—usually much faded—was decorated with a pattern in gold thread. This pattern was set to one side on the men's caps, thus giving the effect of a half-circle, but in the women's caps was placed in the centre. The latter

Local Costume

often had attached to the central design a black kerchief which hung down over the shoulders, or was spread on either side and fastened under the chin, and the cap was usually worn tilted forward at a sharp angle. Heavy braids of hair escaped from beneath the cap and curled over the nape of the neck, for bobbing and shingling have not as yet reached this part of Europe, nor would either be tolerated, I imagine, for a single moment.

Although, as I say, the clothing of the folk in the Cattaro market was in the main dull in hue, there were occasional exceptions, for now and then a big brigand-like fellow, brave in scarlet vest, striped sash, and heavy white breeches of Turkish cut, came striding through the crowd. He would be, in all probability, a Montenegrin in native costume—a very effective dress. It is sad to think that it is being slowly replaced by the shoddy and uninspiring clothing which is one of the products of this sordid commercial age.



A MONTENEGRIN

To the Land of the Eagle

Cettinje, the capital of Montenegro, was my next objective and I got away after one false start. This was due to my over-estimating the capacity of the postal motor 'bus, or "posta", and my failure to book a seat beforehand. It delayed me for twenty-four hours.

Our departure on the second day was not without incident. A great storm of rain and hail, with thunder, swept the town at midday, and, whether from this or some other cause, the engine refused to respond to the call of duty. One cylinder worked spasmodically and enabled us to progress by a series of agonising jerks some fifty yards along the quayside. Then we stopped dead. At last, with the assistance of half the population of Cattaro, the engine was persuaded to function more normally, and, an hour and a quarter behind time, we started off once more. Even then the engine was misfiring, and I had grave doubts of the ability of the heavy 'bus to negotiate the great mountain pass ahead of us. But all went well. The engine warmed up, and the posta tackled the incline in fine style.

Including myself, there were eleven passengers. This left one vacant seat, and as the quarters were very cramped and I found it difficult to dispose of my legs I was glad that the vacancy happened to be next to me. But my satisfaction was shortlived. A little way out of Cattaro we stopped to pick up a gendarme—a fat fellow with rifle, accoutrements, and a bulky greatcoat—and thenceforward we were wedged in so tightly that we could scarcely breathe. Sitting next to me on the opposite side to the soldier was a

Fellow Sufferers

pretty Austrian girl whose smiling apologies every time the lurching of the 'bus threw her against me were some compensation for the over-crowding, for in such circumstances who is one's neighbour becomes a matter of moment. I might have been a good deal worse off. The remaining passengers were soldiers and peasants. An old dame with a tanned and lined face, crowned with a great braid of greying hair sat with another peasant woman on the back seat, and carried on an animated conversation with everybody in the 'bus, especially with the soldiers. She was evidently a well-known local character. I wish I could have understood what they were all talking about. A quaint individual with watery eyes, no chin, and a fez stuck so far back on his head that how it stopped on was a miracle, rather puzzled me. I could not place him. He was not a peasant, nor did he look like a shopkeeper or tradesman. But later on, when the Austrian girl left and he crossed over and took her place by my side my nose was assailed by such an exceedingly unpleasant aroma that I divined without difficulty that the gentleman was in the fish business.

The thunderstorm had passed off. The air was clear, and the visibility, as the weather reports say, was good. As the road zigzagged up the almost perpendicular mountain side the view was superb. The higher we rose the grander became the scenery. The Adriatic, now visible, stretched away to the West like a plain of glittering silver. The jagged masses of the limestone, veined and broken by blue shadows, formed all kinds of intricate and lovely patterns.

To the Land of the Eagle

In the bright sunshine the rocks seemed almost pure white. Below us lay the Bocche, with its little towns scattered along the water's edge, and Cattaro, now a mere jumble of roofs and housetops. At times I looked down from the 'bus window into space, so near were we to the edge of the precipice, and at the hairpin turns, where it was usually necessary to stop and back the 'bus, I confess I held my breath, for, although the turnings were slightly protected, the low wall—more often than not broken down by some careless driver—was quite insufficient to hold anything as heavy as a motor 'bus carrying fifteen people and a great load of baggage and mails.

At intervals we overtook peasants toiling up the road on foot and driving their pack-donkeys before them. They were on their way home with such of their produce as had failed to find a purchaser in the Cattaro market. Many of the packs were crowned with a live kid or lamb securely tied on with a rope.

Here and there amongst the rocks browsed goats watched by bright-eyed shepherd-lads and lasses—fine sturdy children glowing with rude health. They must have come over from the Montenegrin villages, as I saw no cottages on the Cattaro side of the pass.

At one point, looking down from the window, we could see, far below us, a string of peasants toiling ant-like up a narrow winding track. They were Montenegrins from Cetinje who had tramped on foot to Cattaro early that morning and were now on their way home again. These

The Njegus Kavana

hardy mountain folk make nothing of crossing the pass twice in one day—a good four hours' journey each way—in order to transact their business at Cattaro.



MONTENEGRINS

The head of the pass is at an altitude of 1,274 metres. A short distance beyond it is the village of Njegus,* which consists of a small street of strongly-built cottages of white

* J is pronounced as Y.

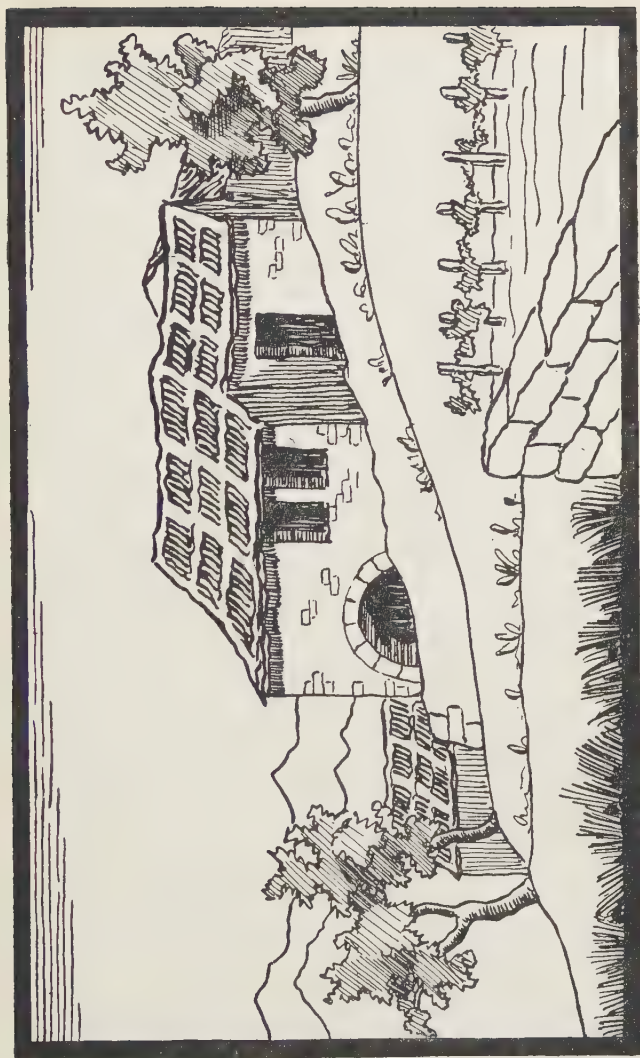
To the Land of the Eagle

stone, a church, a few scattered houses, and some fields hedged with low stone walls. White limestone rocks surround the little plateau, and the snowclad summit of Lovcen towers in the background.

The 'bus drew up at a "kavana" or coffee-shop, and I was glad to follow the example of the other passengers and get down and stretch my cramped limbs. This was evidently the destination of the cheery old peasant woman, for she was met by a younger woman and two small boys—probably daughter and grandsons. And what a welcome they gave her! Such huggings! Such cries of delight! Such peerings into the basket to look at the treasured white loaves and other delicacies brought up from Cattaro!

The coffee provided in the kavana—primitive though the place was—was excellent, as it is indeed throughout the Balkans. It was made in the Turkish fashion, rather thick and sweet; and the price—one dinar, rather less than a penny—was reasonable enough.

As we were already very late, a long stop was not permitted. Soon we were off at a good round pace, winding and twisting amongst the rocks and between the little flat stone-edged fields which miraculously provide sustenance for their Montenegrin owners. Then, suddenly, on turning an abrupt corner, an amazing panorama burst into view. Mountains—mountains—mountains! Nothing but mountains! One literally held one's breath. As far as the eye could see they stretched—range after range of jagged limestone peaks, the nearer ranges white and grey, the farther



A MONTENEGRIN HOMESTEAD

Outlaws

ranges purple and blue, and on the distant horizon the Albanian Alps thrusting their snow-clad summits into the clouds. Outspread before us lay Montenegro, the land whose people have struggled so long and so successfully against the ever-threatening domination of the Turk, the little country which came into the war on the side of Great Britain and her allies, and which, by the machinations of politicians has now become merged into the combination of States called Jugo-Slavia, or sometimes, more grandiloquently, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. There still exists a band of patriots who refuse to surrender their independence. They live as outlaws in the remoter regions towards the North, hunted down by the Serbian gendarmerie, subsisting as best they may, their hand against every man since every man's hand is against them, killing, when opportunity offers, not only the Serbian oppressor (as they consider him) but those who have, in their view, betrayed Montenegro by accepting the status of a subject race. One cannot help regarding them with a certain feeling of sympathy, although it is a pity that they should weaken their position by excesses committed at the expense of their fellow-countrymen. But of the political situation in Montenegro I shall have more to say later on.

The descent by the winding road was fairly steep. The 'bus rushed along at a good speed, swinging round the sharp bends and corners and throwing the passengers against one another at every turn. I heartily wished the Austrian girl back instead of the fishy-smelling gentleman in the fez. I

To the Land of the Eagle

clung for dear life to the open window—the only one in the 'bus,—at my elbow, for what with the rapid descent with my back to the driver, the swaying of the 'bus as it took the increasingly numerous turnings, the smell of stale fish, and the general thickness of the atmosphere, I had a horrible misgiving lest I might emulate the old lady of Spain who was awfully ill in the train again and again and—but everyone knows that poignant limerick. Afterwards I found that “posta-sickness” is a common complaint in Montenegro, and learned the wisdom of securing a seat facing the driver whenever one was available.

At length we came in sight of the plateau amongst the rocks in which the town of Cetinje lies, and before long drew up outside the Cetinje Post Office. It was with great relief that I got down from the 'bus, for I was feeling sick and dizzy.

Inside the posta I had seen a cryptic notice which I made out to be “Hotel Paris” in Slav characters. I decided to see what the hotel looked like and whether it seemed a possible temporary abode. But my decision wilted under the importunings of an affable but persistent gentleman in shabby clothes and a faded Montenegrin cap. This individual, who spoke a few words of German, carried me off, whether I would or not, to an inn calling itself the Hotel Jadran, which was, he assured me, “sehr gut”. My heart sank as we entered a stuffy little bar-parlour which contained a kitchen table, venerable and none too clean, a second table slightly more respectable by reason of a torn

The Hotel Jadran

oilcloth cover, a couple of chairs, and a counter with some bottles on it and a fly-blown glass box containing specimens of the art of the local pastrycook. A reassuringly pleasant-looking woman emerged from the regions at the back, and I was taken upstairs. Two specimens of poverty incarnate, to whom I had consigned my luggage, followed and deposited my belongings on the floor, accepted a small gratuity apiece and retired. The hostess hurried with clean sheets and pillow-cases to make the bed, whilst the host produced fresh water and a towel. Whether I liked it or not, the Hotel Jadran had secured me as a guest.

As a matter of fact, the place might have been very much worse. It was almost a palace compared to some of the inns in which I stayed during my subsequent wanderings. And its shortcomings, whatever they were, were more than compensated for by the kindness of my hosts, who did everything within their power to make me comfortable. A friendly smile, a handshake and a welcome mean more to the wanderer than material comfort—they do, at all events, to me.

In my bedroom were an iron bedstead with a spring mattress, a sofa, a small table, two chairs, a washstand, and—of all things—a circular piano stool. Rugs hung on the walls (the first touch of the East I had so far met with), some pictures of Venice, and an ikon. On a “what-not” like those beloved of our Victorian grandparents stood a number of family portraits and two photographs of funerals—depressing relics which showed the open coffin with the

To the Land of the Eagle

corpse exposed to full view, and the relatives gazing at it sorrowfully but at the same time evidently quite conscious of the camera. Montenegrins belong to the Orthodox, or Greek, Church, and this is one of their funeral customs. The double windows of the little room looked out on the enormous building which serves to-day as post office and town hall (a relic, no doubt, of the days when Cetinje was an important place, the seat of Government and the residence of the king and his court), and on the wide square in which stood rows of lorries and postas similar to the one which had just brought me from Cattaro. These lorries and postas are part of the reparations paid to Montenegro by Austria, and are on this account rather a curiosity to an Englishman whose hopes of ever seeing anything tangible in the way of reparations are rapidly melting into thin air.

As soon as I came downstairs I was once again taken charge of by my self-appointed cicerone and conducted, willy-nilly, round the town and shown the sights. These included the palace of the late King Nicholas—a plain, slate-roofed, yellow-plastered building, rather like a school—and a relief map of Montenegro on a large scale which was made by the Austrians during their occupation. This map is housed in a special building, and is spanned by a bridge from which one can look down at the panorama of Montenegro in miniature. It gives an excellent idea of the country—the endless ranges of mountains, the river beds, the few cultivable plateaus, and the Adriatic coast-line.

I had originally intended to push on at once to Scutari,

An Unexpected Discovery

and Albania, but circumstances conspired to make me alter my plans. While wandering round the town I came, much to my surprise, across a large building which had over the door an oval shield bearing the British Royal Arms and the words "British Consulate". I had had no idea that Cetinje was of sufficient importance in these days to require a consul. That evening I called and, although a complete stranger, was hospitably received by the consul and his wife and told by them to make the consulate my home as long as I remained in Cetinje. This offer was so kindly made and was so evidently genuine that I was only too delighted to take advantage of it, and I am glad to have this opportunity of expressing my gratitude, and my appreciation of such unexpected generosity.

I retain a very vivid recollection of breakfast on the morning after my arrival. A table had been set out in the garden in the shade of some pines. It was brilliantly sunny and clear, and the cool mountain air was exhilarating in the extreme. We had, I remember, a proper British breakfast—bacon and eggs, marmalade, and well-made tea—and although as a rule I try to leave my British prejudices behind me when I go abroad and conform to the customs of whatever country I may happen to be in, I must confess to a keen appreciation of it after the soggy lump of new bread and the milky coffee which had lately been my portion.

What struck me about Cetinje was the extraordinary whiteness and cleanliness of everything. It was partly due to the wonderful clarity of the air and partly to the light

To the Land of the Eagle

colour of the limestone, both in the rocks and mountains and in the houses and cottages which are built of it. The streets and roads themselves seemed white also. I made several attempts to convey in water-colours some hint of this crystal brilliance but failed utterly.

That afternoon my hosts took me for a walk over the nearer mountains and showed me the Lake of Scutari and the Albanian Alps—a magnificent prospect. Although spring is late in reaching these altitudes, many wild flowers were blooming in the crannies and crevices among the rocks. Primroses and violets were abundant, as well as many tiny rock flowers that I am not botanist enough to name, and some very beautiful fritillaries. The oak scrub with which the mountainsides are covered did not as yet show any hint of green, and this, no doubt contributed towards the whitey-greyness of the landscape to which I have referred. Two months later, when I returned to Cetinje on my way home, this effect was much less noticeable.

A day or two later the consul proposed a tramp through the mountains to visit a village called Ljubotin, reachable, he said, in two hours and forty minutes by hard walking. The idea was to walk there in the afternoon, stay the night in a Montenegrin house, and return the following day by a different route. Such an opportunity of seeing, at first hand, something of the life of the people was too good to be missed, and I acquiesced in the proposal most willingly. We travelled light—my luggage, in fact, consisted of pyjamas and a comb. And had I dispensed, as I might have done, with

Off on Tramp

the pyjamas, I should have lived for the time more nearly as the natives live, since special night garments are an unknown luxury in the Montenegrin mountain villages.



A MOUNTAIN ROAD

We followed a rough pathway—or I thought it rough at the time, though actually it was smooth compared to others by which I travelled later. It was rough enough, however, to claim a good deal of attention, and it was only when we

To the Land of the Eagle

halted to regain our breath that I had any opportunity of observing the landscape. At frequent intervals we passed pockets in the rock where tiny fields—made at the cost of enormous labour—awaited the bursting of the green rye shoots. In one such pocket men were ploughing with a couple of donkeys and a small wooden plough. There were no signs of houses or habitation any where near, and the consul told me that the people tramp for many miles to work in these laboriously-made plots of land—one cannot call them fields, for many are no bigger than a tennis lawn—and in some instances even carry the soil thither on their backs in order to make them. They are eloquent of the life of the Montenegrins, and of the determination and tenacity with which this hardy nation has struggled for its existence ever since its people refused to submit to Turkish domination, and took refuge among the mountains.

We had been tramping for a couple of hours when the consul confessed himself uncertain whether we were on the right track. We were surrounded by rocks and mountain-tops all very much alike, and it was difficult to pick up any landmark. Although I was feeling remarkably fresh for a Londoner unused to strenuous walking exercise I had no desire to be overtaken by darkness in such country, and the idea of spending a night in the open on the top of a Montenegrin mountain did not appeal to me. The consul reassured me. We were bound to come to a village before long, he said. We pushed on. Presently we saw some huts or hovels at a short distance from the track. But they proved to be

The Plain of Ljubotin

empty cowsheds. Still in uncertainty, we resumed our way. At length we rounded a corner, and found goats and cattle feeding, and the next moment were hailed—to my intense astonishment—in English.

I found later that English-speaking, or, more correctly, American-speaking, Montenegrins are common, since so many of the young men go, or used to go, to the States to work in the mines. I did not know this at the time, and my surprise at being addressed in English by a shepherd when lost in the mountains of Montenegro was thus very natural. The man told us that we had come at least an hour's journey out of our way, and put us on the right road. After an exchange of cigarettes (the Montenegrin, however poor, is always ready with the offer of his tobacco-box) we started once more, and before long found ourselves looking down into the Ljubotin plain and saw the group of houses—mere specks in the distance—for which we were bound.

The view at this point was wonderful. The plain, criss-crossed with a pattern of little fields, some red-brown, others bright green, lay several thousand feet below us, and extended for perhaps two or three miles each way. Jagged rocks broke its surface at intervals. The mountains, barren, rugged, and sheer, hemmed it in on every side and gave it the appearance of an oasis in a wilderness of stone. A zig-zag path brought us at length to level ground. But the going was not nearly so good as it had appeared to be from above, nor was the way as easy to find. We stumbled along the margins of fields, on the tops of stone walls, in

To the Land of the Eagle

water-courses, merely maintaining a general sense of direction. At one point a man shouted after us "Whatch-you-want?"—another English-speaking peasant. But as it was beginning to grow dusk we did not tarry to reply. At last we reached a small church and near-by found a wine-shop. Entering it, we were again addressed in English, and in subsequent conversation with the owner I learnt more about the exodus to America, now, much to the chagrin of the Montenegrins, put a stop to by the new immigration laws. At one time, I was told, there were always 30,000 Montenegrins in voluntary exile in the States, and the throwing back of this number of men on the slender resources of little Montenegro has caused, as may well be imagined, considerable economic distress. Although so many Montenegrins went to the States, it was very rarely that one settled there altogether, for the Montenegrin is nothing if not patriotic. In fact, he is so attached to his country that the returning emigrant, on setting foot once again on his native soil, overcome by emotion, stoops and kisses the ground.

A glass of "raki" (the native spirit) apiece gave a little energy to our now rather lagging footsteps, and enabled us to reach the house, about half a mile further on, on whose hospitality we were relying for supper and bed. The walk had taken us over four hours, and we had hardly had a single "easy".

The occupants accepted our entirely unexpected arrival with every appearance of calm. We were welcomed and made to sit down by a fire of sticks which was burning brightly on the stone floor. The inevitable coffee-pot was

A Montenegrin Welcome

bubbling in the embers, and we were soon sampling its contents. Raki was brought in, and everything was done to make us feel at home. There was no chimney, and the smoke had to find its way through interstices in the roof as best it could, but owing to the height of the room and the lowness of our seats (they were not more than nine inches high) we felt less inconvenience than might have been expected, though some slight smarting in the eyes was inevitable. A pleasant aroma of coffee, mixed with the smell of burning vine wood, filled the air.

A fine old man with a fierce grey moustache and a round Montenegrin cap, was evidently the head of the family. A younger man, also tall and well set up, was the old man's son. Unlike most Montenegrins he was wearing a beard, the reason for which became clear later on. A smiling, apple-faced, old woman superintended the coffee-pot. On tiny three-legged stools sat a pretty, but I regret to say rather dirty, little girl and a fat little boy. A younger woman—the daughter-in-law—served the raki. On her entrance I rose from my seat, intending to be polite, but was pulled down again by the consul who explained to me afterwards that it is not etiquette to notice the womenfolk, the rôle of the Montenegrin woman being to wait upon the menfolk and upon any guests who may happen to come to the house.

Conversation, punctuated by cups of coffee and almost too frequent glasses of raki, went briskly on. The consul spoke Serbian. As I understood nothing beyond the current phrases of greeting, I had leisure to take stock of my

To the Land of the Eagle

surroundings, and to watch the coffee-making operations of the elder woman, which consisted of turning a cylindrical roaster at intervals, grinding the coffee beans when ready in a Turkish hand-mill, and adding the freshly-ground coffee to the simmering contents of the coffee-pot, together with sugar. The result was coffee of a flavour unknown to England, and I found myself again asking the trite question, "Why can't we get coffee like this at home?"—a question which still remains unanswered, for, though I brought back with me a real Turkish coffee-mill, and copied the methods I then and subsequently had so many opportunities of witnessing, I have never yet succeeded in making coffee which tastes as it did out there.

By the light of a lamp on the wall—for night had now fallen—I made out that the floor of the room was partly of stone and partly of wood. The fire, of course, was on the stone part, in a depression made for the purpose. From smoke-blackened beams above hung great sides of bacon and hams. Elsewhere strings of onions, dried mutton, and other food supplies, depended from the ceiling. In the dark recesses of a loft overhead were, doubtless, fuel, and fodder for the cattle. In a corner stood a bedstead with some tumbled, nondescript bedding. A dresser held the scanty store of crockery—chiefly coffee cups and raki glasses. A few pots and pans, a table, and a couple of chairs, with the low benches and stools round the hearth, completed the furnishing of the place.

Some other villagers presently came in and joined the



MONTENEGRIN FAMILY AT HOME

A Bedroom Supper

circle round the fire. More raki was brought and the little glasses—which are always at hand in a Montenegrin house—were filled, emptied, and refilled afresh. “No heeltaps” was the rule, not only for raki but for coffee also. The tiny coffee-cups were handed round on a tray, emptied almost at a gulp, and replaced on the tray immediately. As the coffee, just poured from the boiling coffee-pot, was naturally exceedingly hot, this process was painful. One had to drink with a loud sucking noise in order to get the cooler surface coffee first; this, however, is quite correct, for the noise, in other circles considered impolite, is here expected as a mark of favour and appreciation.

In spite of the raki and the coffee, I was now beginning to feel hungry and to wonder what sort of a meal, if any, our hosts would provide. So it was with some relief that I found myself being ushered into another room in which was a table laid for supper. The room contained in addition three beds, one double and two single. Later on I became accustomed to having my meals in bedrooms, but just then it struck me as strange. The bedroom is the most important room in the Montenegrin house, and it is in the bedroom that one finds the best furniture, the most cherished of the household possessions, the family portraits, and the family tree. The Montenegrins, who claim, probably with justice, to be the aristocracy of the Slav race, are very proud of their descent, and the family tree, carefully framed is generally to be seen hung on the bedroom wall next to a coloured portrait of the late King Nicholas.

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The consul and I sat down at the table and were joined by the old man, our host. The rest of the family refused to eat as they were observing the fast incumbent upon members of the Greek Church during Lent. The head of the family, on account of his age, was excused. The meal consisted of slices of home-grown ham, uncooked but well smoked, boiled eggs, delicious newly-made maize-bread, cheese, and good red wine of home manufacture. The Montenegrin, though almost always very poor, is able to support himself to a great extent on home produce, and though he may lack money he seldom, as far as I could judge, lacks food.

When bedtime—for which I had been ardently longing—arrived, our host rolled himself up in the bedding on one of the single beds, a youth of the family took the other, and the double bed was put at the disposal of the consul and myself. The sheets were as nearly clean as one had any right to expect in the circumstances, and the bed was comfortable except for the pillows, which, as I found later all Montenegrin pillows are, were exceedingly hard. I just remember a woman coming in and taking away the light, and after that I slept, and so did the consul, until morning. And this, I think, is the only time I have had the honour of sharing a bed with a representative of His Majesty's Government.

Apropos of clean sheets, the consul told me that on one occasion his wife had to stop a night at a hotel somewhere in Jugo-Slavia and objected very strongly to the dirty sheets

Sheets and the British Army

she found on the bed. The proprietor met the objection with upraised hands and an expression of pained surprise.

“ Madame does not perhaps know—*the bed was occupied last night by an English Officer ! a Colonel !* ”

Which I think everyone will agree is a pleasing testimony to the reputation for cleanliness of the British army, and of colonels in particular.

It was half-past five the next morning when I saw the young man tumble out of bed. He was fully dressed in a moment. In fact, his dressing reminded me of Dan Leno's house, in which, in order to get from the kitchen to the drawing-room, you just stayed where you were. He slipped quietly out and his departure was followed by sounds of other people moving in the next room, and by the smell of coffee. Soon after a woman came in with three cups, one each for the consul and myself and one for the head of the house who was still slumbering in the third bed. The consul got up and dressed. I followed suit with reluctance. In the kitchen cold water and towels were provided for us and we made our toilet, such as it was. Breakfast followed—coffee with milk and either brown or maize bread. This over, we sat round the fire as on the previous evening, since there seemed nothing else to do, and listened to the howling of the wind and the steady drip of rain. It was a thoroughly wet and depressing day.

Besides the large kitchen and the bedroom in which we had slept, the house had, on the floor below, another large room which I suppose accommodated the women and the

To the Land of the Eagle

children. There was also a cavernous store-room at the back which cut into the hill itself, for the house was built, as so many Montenegrin houses are, against the sloping side of the mountain. Access to this part of the house from above was by means of a trapdoor and an almost perpendicular ladder.

The consul had by this time discovered that we were in a house of mourning. Two members of the family had recently died, one in the village and the other in America. This was the reason of the son's beard. In the Greek church those in mourning do not either shave or wash, though for how long a period this abstention is required I do not know. I should judge, however, that this is not quite such a hardship to them as it would be to people like ourselves, who are prone to imagine that it is impossible to keep clean without a daily bath and plenty of soap. On account of this discovery of the consul's we felt that we could not trespass any longer on the hospitality of these kind people, and, although they pressed us to stay until the weather moderated, we said our farewells and departed. That they put up with us at all in the circumstances, and that they contrived, moreover, to make me feel a welcome guest instead of the intruder I really was, was no small tribute to their idea of what is demanded by the laws of hospitality, as well as a convincing proof of their innate good breeding.

As the going was now worse than ever owing to the rain, the consul decided to make across country for the Rjeka-Cettinje road and so avoid, although the distance was greater, the

Home Again

rough tracks by which we had come on the previous day. A call at a village *en route* enabled us to dry our clothing temporarily at a roaring log fire and provided raki and coffee to warm us within. Eventually, at about two in the afternoon, we reached Cetinje, very wet, very tired, and very hungry. And so ended my first excursion into the wilds of Montenegro.

CHAPTER III

The One-Language Englishman—Easter Festivities—A Beautiful Woman—Off on Tramp Again—The F.O. Bag—Down to Rjeka—A Strange Industry—Diamond Cut Diamond—Pelicans—We Arrive at Boljevici—"See Here, Meest'r Cawns'!"—A Warlike Race—An Evening's Entertainment—"Dovidjenja!"—A Useful Memorial—A Festive Afternoon—"The Captain"—"Poor Pussy!"



A MONTENEGRIN

THE Englishman, as everybody knows, is the most indifferent linguist in the world. And, to make matters worse, is proud of being so. "If the foreigner wants to talk to me, let him jolly well learn English!" says he, wrapping himself in that mantle of self-complacency and fancied superiority which, little though he realises it, causes so many smiles at his expense. There is, however, some excuse for his linguistic weakness, for, unlike the continental nations, Britain is not closely surrounded by races speaking many different tongues, nor do foreigners come into the country, either on business or pleasure, in nearly such large numbers as they do elsewhere. It is only fair to say, too, that the reproach of being a one-language nation cannot be urged against us with such truth

Easter Festivities

as it once could be, and that many more British travellers are bi-lingual than before the war. This was remarked upon to me several times by Montenegrins, Albanians, Serbs and others, as well as by compatriots of my own resident abroad.

My own deplorable ignorance of modern languages came home to me very forcibly whilst I was at Cetinje. It was Easter—Easter in the Greek church being a week later than it is with us—and the town was *en fête*. Easter day there is spent in a round of visits, the bachelors paying their calls in the morning, the married men and their wives in the afternoon. At the Hotel Jadran, where I still slept every night, the entertainment began early. The best room was decorated and the table was loaded with cakes, biscuits, pastries, coloured eggs, wine and raki, and despite the fact that I had had no breakfast I was unable to escape without joining my host and hostess and drinking with them and their friends. This was just a foretaste of what was to come. I arrived at the consulate with two hard-boiled eggs, one green and the other purple—the nucleus of a collection which swelled to vast proportions during the day. Later on I accompanied the consul and his wife on their round of official visits, every person of any importance in the community expecting a call, with the lamentable result that I staggered home late in the afternoon filled internally with a horrible mixture of wine, cake, raki, raw ham, and sweatmeats of various kinds, and with my pockets simply bulging with purple, green, yellow, pink, blue, red, and variegated hard-boiled eggs. It was

To the Land of the Eagle

during this round of calls that I realised so bitterly my own incapacity in the matter of languages, being put to shame by the varied linguistic attainments of the Cetinje folk who, almost without exception, spoke French, German and Italian, and often English as well, and especially by my friend the consul who understood and spoke fluently seven languages besides his own.

That evening an English lady on her way to Scutari, called at the consulate. She was short and rotund, wore "sensible" shoes, a tweed costume, and a jaunty hat. Her manner was decided, even a little abrupt, and her nationality could not be questioned for an instant. She was British through and through, and of the type we are fond of describing as "capable". She had been engaged on relief work in Serbia and was quite ready to tell of her experiences, which had been many. The Serbian woman's first question, she said, was invariably "How many children have you?" To which her reply had to be "None". Looks of pity would appear on the faces of her questioners until she added the information that she was unmarried, whereupon the expression would change to one of incredulous astonishment, followed by the demand "Why?" One woman even went so far as to recommend her to dye her greying hair and guaranteed if she would do so, to find her a husband.

This lady spoke warmly of the Serbs and lauded their good qualities. I was glad to hear this opinion, as my own idea of the Serbian character, gathered rather from the viewpoint of the Montenegrin, was hardly so favourable.

A Beautiful Woman

Being a mere male I was interested in the looks of the Montenegrin womenfolk. They have well-cut features, the nose strong and prominent—though not disproportionately so—good mouth, fine eyes, and a clear healthy complexion. They carry themselves well also. They can certainly be described as good-looking. But as certainly they cannot be described as pretty. The really pretty women are to be found down in Cattaro and the Bocche, and in other parts of Dalmatia, especially in Ragusa, which is famed for the beauty of its daughters. I think I can truthfully say that a Ragusan lady to whom I was introduced at Cettinje was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen—perfect in features, colouring, complexion, figure, and grace of poise and manner. The consul described her as “a hundred per cent. beautiful”, and I agreed with him.

This reminds me, en passant, of a delightful sentence I once met with in a MS novel which I was reading for a publisher. It ran something like this :

“Major Blank regarded her with interest. *Being in the diplomatic service* he was an excellent judge of female beauty.”

But to return to the Montenegrins. The men are fine specimens of humanity, as mountaineers usually are, not only physically but in character also. They are strong, robust and virile—fit descendants of a fighting race. Like the women, they have aquiline noses, firm mouths and chins, and keen intelligent eyes. They impressed me as being honest, straightforward folk, well able to hold their own in any company, self-possessed, unconscious of social differences

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or rank, and equally at ease whether with prince or pauper. The male sex is the dominant sex, and in Montenegro the



MONTENEGRIN WOMEN

women seem to be, and probably are, content with a more or less subordinate position. In addition to doing the work of the house they labour in the fields, and where the family possess no donkey they act as porters, and it is no uncommon

Off on Tramp Again

thing to see a Montenegrin man striding unencumbered up a mountain road followed by his womenfolk heavily laden with baggage. To the Englishman with his ingrained notions of chivalry this seems objectionable, but it may be doubted whether it ever enters the heads of the women to rebel, or whether they have ever considered it less than fitting that their backs should be bent beneath the weight of their lord's belongings.

On Monday, April 29th, we were up betimes in order to make an early start for Rjeka and the mountainous country—called the Krajna—that lies between the Lake of Scutari and the Adriatic. The consul was going on an official trip of some days' duration, and, as I had proved myself a sufficiently reliable walker on our visit to Ljubotin, had asked me to accompany him. Light travelling was to be the order of the day. The consul took a rucksack for himself and as I possessed nothing that would serve the purpose, lent me a Foreign Office letter bag. As it turned out, I could have had nothing better. The weather on several occasions was very wet, but the bag resisted the continuous soaking it received and not a drop of water penetrated into it except once—and that was when the consul, looking in in order to allay my fears for the safety of my drawing materials, accidentally let a small rivulet fall into the bag from the rim of his hat. Otherwise the contents remained bone dry, and I can give the F.O. letter bag full marks for wet-resisting qualities.

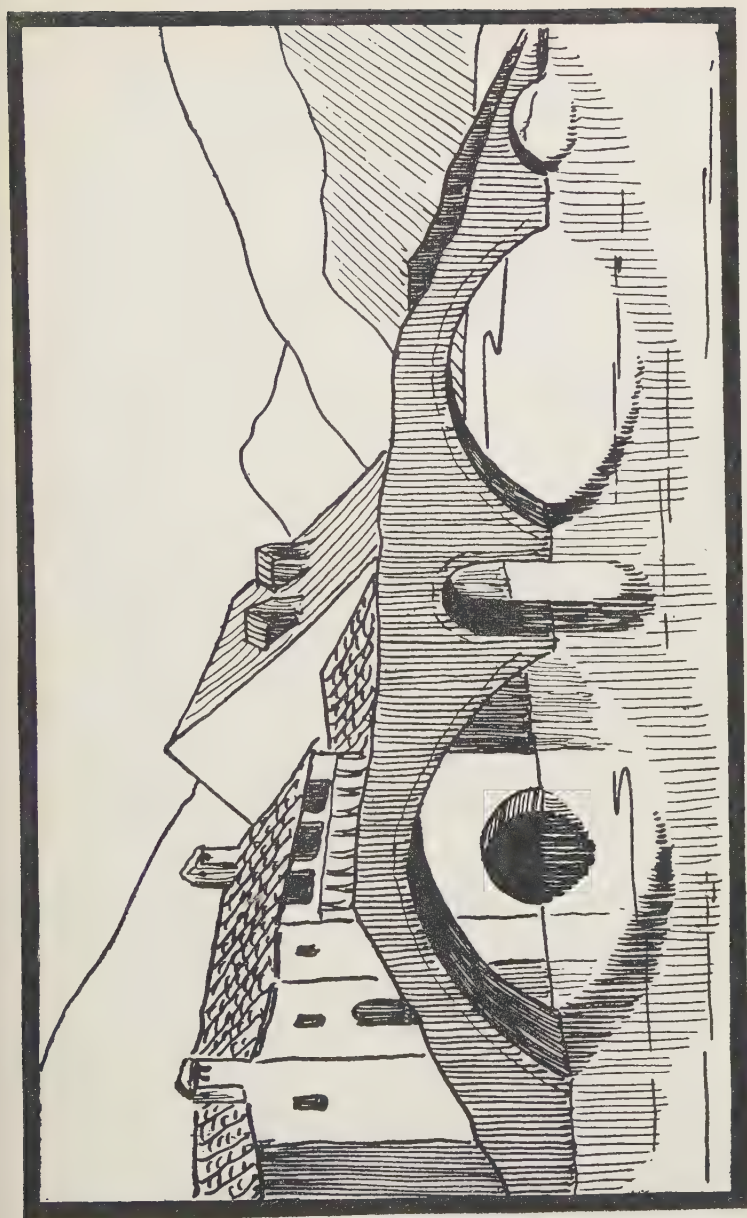
Beyond drawing apparatus I took only pyjamas, a spare

To the Land of the Eagle

pair of socks, shaving tackle, toothbrush, and comb—and found this quite enough. As I had no waterproof with me, I took an umbrella. This completed my outfit. In fact, our equipment was so slender that the consul's Montenegrin servant, Vojn, who accompanied us, was able to carry it for the greater part of the way in addition to his own kit.

Our start was somewhat inauspicious. When I arrived at the consulate at 7.30 a.m. according to arrangement, I found the car which was to take us to Rjeka, and which appeared to be the first Ford ever made, jacked up, and the roadway strewn with tools and tyres and other gear. It seemed likely that we should miss the Scutari boat at which we were aiming. But the ramshackle old vehicle was eventually patched up and we all got in—the consul, myself, Vojn and the English lady. It was a grand morning, and the views as we wound along the serpentine road were magnificent. Below us lay a fertile plain, brilliantly green in contrast with the white and barren rocks of Cetinje. It was celebrated, the consul told me, for the quality of the raki produced there, which was said to be the finest in Montenegro. Raki, being a pure, unsweetened grape spirit, is best made from grapes which grow at the higher altitudes. The good Montenegrin wine, on the other hand, comes from the low-lying villages, where the grapes have a better chance of fully ripening.

On the plain could be descried a few cottages, looking from our elevation like dolls' houses. The stone walls which divided the fields made a pattern of white lines on the green.



RJEKA

Down to Rjeka

Around us rose the mountains, grey above, but tinged with faint leafage on the lower slopes where the oak scrub was beginning to bud. Ahead lay the lake and the snowy ranges of the Albanian Alps.

Down and down we went, the vegetation becoming greener and more luxuriant as we descended. It was like watching the coming of summer accelerated many times over. The white and pink of fruit trees contrasted with the vivid green of the springing wheat. Here and there buttercups had taken possession of a field and spread over it a mantle of gold. The nearer hillsides were bright with wild flowers, and Scutari Lake shone like silver in the brilliant morning light. I was quite sorry when our arrival at Rjeka brought this lovely drive to an end.

Rjeka, a picturesque little place at the extreme end of the lake, is situated on the estuary of one of the curious rivers which, like that at Cattaro, appear to come from nowhere, but which are in reality subterranean streams with sources far away in the mountains. The Rjeka river may, in fact, flow down from Cetinje underground, for there is a small stream on the Cetinje plain which runs for a few yards and then disappears into the earth and is seen no more. Near Rjeka is the building in which printing was done for the first time in Slav characters, and, pleasantly situated on the hillside above the water, is a delightful little country house which was at one period the summer residence of King Nicholas.

A short distance beyond Rjeka we found a wharf and a

To the Land of the Eagle

diminutive steamer. This was the boat for Scutari by which the consul and I were to travel as far as a place called Virpazar.

Scutari Lake teems with fish. Carp, eels and big trout are caught in it, and sometimes salmon and sturgeon. I was sceptical about the latter fish until later on at Scutari I saw locally-made caviare on sale in the market. A smaller fish, called the "ukljeva", is also abundant. From the scales of this fish artificial pearls are made, and since these scales fetch as much as 200 dinars (equivalent to about 12s. 6d.) a kilo those engaged in the industry are well off, and the village (called Vranjina), which lies at the foot of a conical mountain on an island in the lake, and is the centre of the industry, is the richest village in Montenegro. We passed it in our little steamer about an hour after leaving Rjeka.

Not long ago a German Jew engaged in the artificial pearl business went in person to Vranjina thinking to drive a hard bargain with the fishermen. The scales are weighed after being squeezed as free of water as possible by hand, and there is thus some opportunity for sharp practice. The Jew, judging the Montenegrin by his own standards, thought it might be wise to insist on squeezing the scales himself, and did so. But the fishermen, incensed by the aspersion cast on their honesty, and resenting the fellow's meanness, were equal to the occasion. They put the scales into soapy water, and this rendered them so slippery that the Jew, to his confusion, found it quite impossible to squeeze them at all. He was, however, so much impressed by the smartness

Pelicans

of the fishermen and by the trick they had played him (a trick after his own heart) that he took everything in good part and concluded the business, eventually, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

A short distance beyond Vranjina is an island almost completely covered with ancient Turkish fortifications. As I went forward to look at it better, my attention was caught by some birds on the water ahead of us. They were too big for ducks and they didn't look like geese. I was puzzled to think what they could be until they rose and flew heavily away low down over the water. Then I saw that they were pelicans. The habitat of pelicans—apart from St. James's Park—had been until then a sealed book to me, and this was the first time I had seen them in the wild state.

Soon after this we reached Virpazar, approaching it by a tortuous channel between partly submerged trees, as the water at this season of the year is high. Having said good-bye to the lady from Serbia, who was going on to Scutari, we went ashore, and were warmly greeted by two splendid old men in full Montenegrin dress. They were friends of the consul and it was at their house that we were to stay that night. They led us to a cottage and by a broken flight of steps into an upper room where several men sat at a table drinking. The inevitable raki bottle circulated, as well as a bottle of green Chartreuse, and all refusals were laughed aside. I had much ado to make my apologies and escape from the company on the grounds of wishing to make a sketch, but I succeeded at last in doing so.

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A little later the consul rescued me from the crowd of curious villagers by which I was surrounded—an inevitable accompaniment of sketching in this part of the world—and



A THRESHING FLOOR ON THE HILLSIDE ABOVE THE TRMNITSA PLAIN

with the two Montenegrins we set off on foot along the railway track (a narrow gauge that crosses the mountains to Bar, the little Montenegrin port on the Adriatic), and after half an hour's walking reached the Trmnitsa Plain and Boljevici village. The plain, which lies in a cup in the mountains, was green with young rye and wheat and yellow

We Arrive at Boljevici

with buttercups and cowslips. Frogs were croaking in the marsh, and in the copses nightingales were singing lustily. Following a footpath through the fields we arrived at the house of our guides and were warmly welcomed by two old Montenegrin ladies. Both gave the consul resounding kisses and showed great delight at seeing him—indeed, he might have been a son returning from abroad after many years' absence. An enormous lunch was provided—as usual, in the best bedroom—and then began the real business of the day, for everyone in the community expected a call, and it was no easy task to climb the steep tracks and rocky paths which led from house to house in the village. The consul bore the lion's share of the visiting, as he had not my excuse of wanting to sketch—an excuse of which I took every advantage, not being so inured to the customs of the country as was the consul.

One of the Montenegrins with us—a wild-looking young fellow in ragged European clothes—spoke English. He could not make a living in Montenegro and had therefore spent a good deal of his life in the United States working as a miner. He was very proud of the view from his cottage, which was indeed superb, and I tried to imagine him, home after a long exile in the mines, looking out from the doorway at the familiar and well-loved scene—the green and yellow plain, the white houses of Virpazar, the silver lake, and the far blue mountains. Then must he surely kneel, I thought, and kiss the ground with tears.

At the moment, however, he showed no vestige of

To the Land of the Eagle

sentiment. His voice was loud and harsh as he talked excitedly in American-negro dialect.

“ See here, Meest’r Cawns’l, I’ll be right pleased ef yo’ll hit mah house any time’s yo happen along. Don’t yo’ forget, Meest’r Cawns’l. Hit mah house ! Hit mah house any time’s yo happen along ! ”

The residence of our two hosts, which lay at the foot of the hillside and on the edge of the plain, belonged, we were told, to the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in the last Montenegrin Government. He it was who drafted the historic dispatch in which heroic little Montenegro declared War on Austria. According to our notions—perhaps rather snobbish—the house was a poor one, not much superior to a cottage, and hardly a suitable residence for a Minister of the Crown. But Montenegrin standards are very different to ours. These folk, for Montenegrins, were well-to-do, and exceedingly proud of their family and descent. On the bedroom wall hung the family tree, portraits of King Nicholas and other royalties, and battle scenes which depicted Turks and Montenegrins fighting hand-to-hand in clouds of smoke and flame. Such pictures are commonly found in Montenegrin houses, for the national heroes of Montenegro are soldiers, the traditions of the people are warlike, and war is the topic of Montenegrin verse and folk-song. Little else can be expected of a nation that has only maintained its independence by centuries of defensive warfare. If the absorption of Montenegro into the Union of States called Jugo-Slavia makes it possible for the Montenegrin to

An Evening's Entertainment

exchange the sword for the ploughshare and to develop the arts of peace rather than the art of war, the politicians who brought it about may claim to have accomplished a useful task. At the same time, it is easy to understand the resentment felt by old soldiers such as were our two hosts at what, rightly or wrongly, they seemed to regard as the betrayal of their country. To deal with such proud folk needs great tact—more tact than, as I am inclined to suspect, the Jugo-Slav Government possesses.

That evening after supper we repaired to the kitchen, or living-room, where a number of men and youths from the village had gathered to sing and otherwise to entertain us. Seats of honour were allotted to us by the fire, which was burning but indifferently and emitting too much smoke to be pleasant. As far as the dim light permitted me to count, there were about five-and-twenty visitors present, crowded on low benches and stools, sitting on one another's knees, and otherwise disposing themselves in the cramped space available. One of our hosts produced a "gusla", which is the national instrument of Montenegro. It is a one-stringed affair with a small body, or sound box, over which a skin is tightly stretched. The narrow neck terminates in a head, often carved into some quaint or grotesque shape. A peg thrust through it serves as a means for tuning when tuning is needed. The string is raised half an inch above the neck and body, and the notes are obtained by stopping the string with the finger, though without pressing down upon the neck as is usual in playing the string instruments to which

To the Land of the Eagle

we are accustomed. A bow, arched like the bow of a double-bass, is used, and the tone which results resembles that of a viola. The open string of our host's gusla gave the note A flat, and the four notes, A flat, A natural, B flat, and B natural, formed the complete scale. It may be imagined that the sounds produced were, at all events to our ears, of a somewhat melancholy and monotonous character, though I have to admit that a gusla player who followed our host, obtained a very much greater variety of tunes than I had thought possible out of a scale consisting of four semitones only.

The beginning of a song accompanied by the gusla is alarming. After a few preliminary bars on the instrument the singer breaks out suddenly into a high strained tenor—almost alto—apparently far above his real compass. Fortunately for both singer and audience this does not last long, and the tune soon drops to a more convenient pitch and remains in unison with the gusla until the end of the verse. The songs, of epic length, are, though the Western listener would hardly think it, all about war and fighting, and deal with the exploits of Montenegro's national heroes.

Our evening's entertainment began with songs of this type. They were succeeded by chorus songs in unison—vigorous and rhythmic, though not particularly melodious—in which all the company joined after a line or two of solo. Following this came dancing. A space was somehow cleared, a youth produced a mouth-organ, and six men with linked arms danced a country dance. The artist on the mouth-organ played, as far as his instrument would allow,

“ Dovidjenja ! ”

native tunes. The rhythm, at all events, was native. The harmony, of the crude mouth-organ kind, was complicated by the simultaneous sounding of both the major third and the minor third, with an effect that was baffling and excruciating at the same time. The composer of ultra-modern music might experiment on these lines. I cannot think of anything more calculated to leave the listener “ in the air ” than a determined full close ending upon a common chord in which both major and minor thirds are sounded together.

Towards the end of the evening the two old ladies, their domestic labours finished for the day, squeezed in by the doorway to enjoy the fun. A little servant-maid, a pretty child of about fourteen with a Madonna-like face, came in also and watched the proceedings—now a rough but good-humoured game of forfeits—with brightly shining eyes. When all was over the company shook hands with each of us one by one, as etiquette seemed to demand, and departed into the night.

As a long walk lay ahead of us we rose early on the next day, said good-bye to the old ladies, and started off on foot up the mountains. The men accompanied us for a short distance, in the polite Montenegrin way, and then, with many “ Z Bogoms ” and “ Dovidjenjas ” (“ God be with you ” and “ au revoir ”) returned down the steep village path, leaving us to our climb.

I shall never forget those two old fellows, upright and hale in spite of their seventy-odd years, with fine yet humorous faces, and so splendid in their national costume

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(embroidered scarlet vest, flowing full-skirted coat, striped sash, blue breeches and pointed shoes). Their unostentatious and unassuming hospitality, their noble bearing, and their courtesy, marked them as gentlemen in the truest sense of the word. The world would be all the better for more like them.

My recollections of that morning's walk are rather indefinite. When one has tramped over somewhat similar country for many hours a day and for several successive days the details become blurred. I remember the general look of the place—the stony hillsides where goats wandered, and the rough and rocky track, often only recognisable by a slight tinge of red earth left by the footsteps of those who had passed that way before us. I know I stopped now and then to regain my breath and to admire the varied views of the lakes and the mountains, and to wonder, whenever I passed a little stony field half hidden amongst the rocks, at the industry of a people who can farm under such difficult and discouraging conditions. I remember also stopping for a drink of water at a fountain in the rock—a memorial fountain, as an inscription indicated—at a point where the path was more than usually steep and arduous, and blessing the builders of it. A more useful form of memorial can scarcely be imagined. There is just such another on the road between Cetinje and Rjeka—a grotto cut into the rock with stone seats and a stone table, where weary folk, toiling heavily-loaded up the long winding trail, may shelter and drink.

A Festive Afternoon

Midday brought us to a mountain village. Its terraced fields, buttressed by walls of white stone, were lustrous with the young rye shoots. Vine tendrils curled round their supporting sticks. Fruit trees—apple, pear, quince and cherry—were blossoming or about to blossom. Wild flowers grew everywhere. Smoke escaping through the roofs of the chimneyless houses tinged the brown tiles with a blue haze. Curly-haired pigs nosed about in rubbish heaps. Dogs slept contentedly in the sunshine. Optimistic poultry scratched on the hard ground for food, and passed unmolested in and out of the open cottage doors. From the distance came the notes of a song, and, that most delightful of all sounds, the laughter of happy children.

We had hoped to succeed in passing through the village unobserved, but luck determined otherwise. Meeting a party of men, with their womenfolk following behind, we were seized upon and taken off on the round of visits we wanted to avoid. The first house at which we called was a stone cottage like an Irish cabin. Almost at the very entrance was a pit of blue-black muck in which two pigs were wallowing contentedly. Within doors we found the usual smoke-blackened kitchen with hams hanging from the sooty rafters and a fire burning on the floor. Beyond the kitchen was the bedroom, and here we sat trying as best we could to evade the well-intentioned hospitality of our hosts. It is desirable in Montenegro, if you value sobriety, to take but the merest sip from your raki glass, for the bottle circulates fast and, protest as you may, your glass is kept full to the brim.

To the Land of the Eagle

I soon discovered this. Had I not done so, my recollections of the trip I am trying to describe would have been even hazier than they are.

I do not want to give the impression that it is the habit of the Montenegrin to spend the whole day in drinking, and must therefore explain that the conviviality of our reception was due in part to the season—Easter being the time when the Montenegrin keeps open house—and in part to the desire to do us honour and a determination not to fail in the sacred duty of hospitality. Normally the Montenegrin is abstemious.

In addition to pressing raki, wine, and coffee upon us, to say nothing of cheese and raw ham, our hosts always presented us with a coloured egg, or several coloured eggs, apiece. And they proved very useful. When you are tired and hungry, with many miles yet to go and no prospect of a meal, a hard-boiled egg—whether purple, green, pink, mauve, or variegated—is a stand-by not to be despised.

We lunched that day at the house of another fine old septuagenarian of the old regime. "The Captain," as he was called, had, like our late hosts at Boljevici, a long and honourable war record to his credit. But, being an obstinate old stalwart, he had allowed his tongue to run away with him when discussing the merging of Montenegro into Jugoslavia. This, coming to the ears of spies of the Government, brought reprisals upon his head, and he was arrested and put in gaol for two years—such being the methods of pacification adopted in the Balkans. Needless to say, this

“ Poor Pussy ! ”

persecution not only embittered him still more but alienated all his friends and supporters into the bargain, and the Government, by their ill-advised action, instead of allaying the disaffection as they intended to do, merely succeeded in increasing it.

It was late in the afternoon when we escaped from the importunate hospitality of this wayside village. One of the men whom we had first met constituted himself our guide to a village a few miles further on, and with him, another Montenegrin, and two womenfolk following meekly at a distance behind, we set out once more on our journey. Our cicerone was, it appeared, a man of substance, interested in several branches of local commerce, and owning several houses in different villages. The afternoon's festivities had not been without effect upon him. He talked loudly and volubly, and, as I judged from several interjected protests, on the consul's part, not wisely—politics being, as I have indicated, a dangerous subject. The consul himself seemed little the worse for the afternoon's potations. He evidently possessed the physical qualification so necessary for a consul in Montenegro—a strong head. Nevertheless, a little later, when we were sitting on the balcony of a house in the village at which we finally arrived, and were awaiting the inevitable tray and glasses, he stooped down and patted a small black dog, remarking in dulcet tones as he did so, “ Poor pussy ! Poor little pussy ! ” And this was the first, and only, indication that in spite of appearances all was not quite as it should be.

CHAPTER IV

The Tree Frog—An Evening at Lekič—A Serbian Tune—The Albanian Shepherd—A Primitive Meal—Real Art—Arrival at Livari—A Pugnacious Pig—We Arouse Suspicion—A Restless Night—The Salamander—The Top of the Pass—Stari Bar Ahead—A Grand Scene—Antivari—New Bar—A Snatch of Song—"Marconi"—A Mountain Railway—A Homecoming.

THE village of Lekič, at which we had now arrived, gave the impression of being carved out of the hill-side. Rock and stone were the predominant features, and at the first glance it was hardly possible to distinguish the cottages from the grey background. The walls were thick and solid. The tiled roofs were held in place by rugged masses of white stone, and the faint blue haze which hung above them spoke of warmth—if rather a smoky warmth—within. Judged by Montenegrin standards Lekič is quite a rich village, and I imagine that the reason for this is its proximity to the Lake of Scutari which makes fishing a possible source of profit in addition to agriculture. The man who had appointed himself our guide assumed the rôle of host, and led us with the aid of a lantern—for it was now very dark—over the rocks and boulders which the inhabitants of Lekič call a path. Eventually we reached his house, where we were provided with supper and an entertainment very similar to the one of the previous night at Boljevici.

The Tree Frog

The whole male population of the village must have contrived to squeeze themselves into the small kitchen. My recollections of the evening are vague, for I was overcome by the day's tramp and the hospitable ways of Montenegro. I remember that there was an animated discussion over a



LAKE OF SCUTARI FROM LEKIČ

tree frog whose monotonous cry punctuated the proceedings. The Montenegrins, to a man, declared that the note was that of a bird, and laughed to scorn the consul's asseveration that it was made by a frog. The consul adhered stoutly to his own opinion. There was much argument and much thumping of fists on bundles of dirty Serbian notes, but as it was hardly feasible to search the hillside in the dark the bets remained undecided and no money passed. I

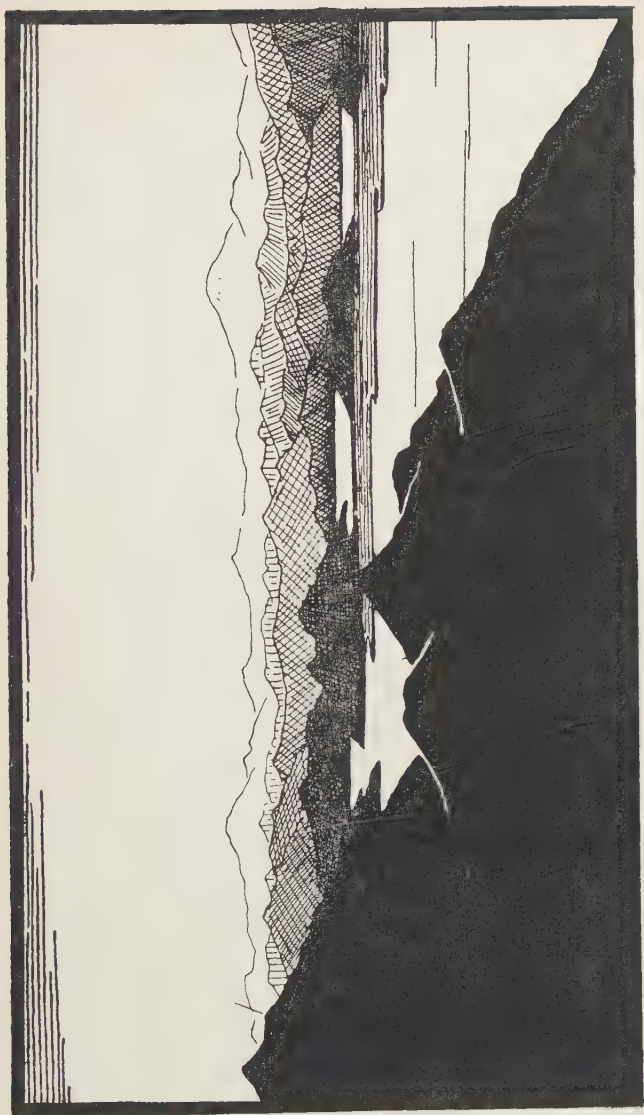
To the Land of the Eagle

remember sitting, one of a circle of men, by the smoky wood fire, and being awakened at intervals to take a pull at the wine bottle and pass it on to my neighbour. And I have a faint recollection of our host, now decidedly in the condition sometimes described as "nicely thank you", loudly declaiming his political views and being taken to task by the consul for doing so. It seemed an interminable evening, for I was very tired, and I was thankful when they took me, half asleep, to a cottage a short distance away and gave me a bed.

I was aroused in the morning by a woman bringing me a cup of coffee. It was only 5.30, but as I knew that the consul was anxious to make an early start I got up and dressed. Leaning out of the window I looked down into an open pen full of mud in which a cow was contentedly munching her morning meal of maize-stalks. A woman in the next room chose that moment to empty a basin of slops out of the window. The cow received the contents full on the back, but if she was aware of the accident she controlled her feelings admirably and continued her breakfast as if nothing had happened.

Down in the smoky kitchen a woman was awaiting me with a basin and a jug of water. I held my hands over the basin while she poured a few drops on them—just enough to swill my face, and no more. It was a case of doing as Rome does. And what, after all—as the Jew-boy said—does the good God send the rain for?

After a light breakfast of maize-bread and milk-coffee we



DURMITOR AND THE ALBANIAN ALPS FROM THE KRAINE

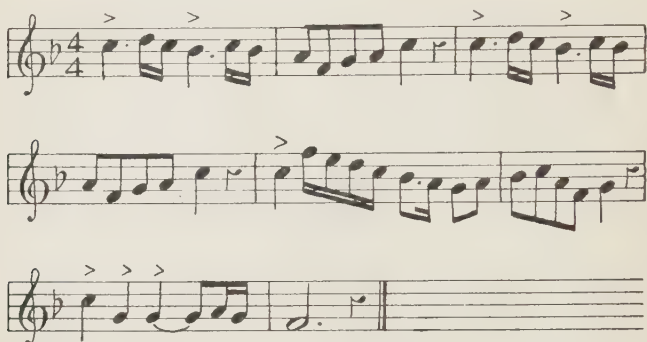
A Serbian Tune

set off for Livari, a village some distance ahead. Our party consisted of Vojn, with the rucksack and the F.O. bag, the consul and myself, and a Montenegrin guide who had kindly offered his services. The going was very rough, and we were hampered by a high wind which at the exposed spots nearly carried us off our feet. Struggling on, we reached a village—merely a few poor cottages, though possibly there were others hidden at a little distance amongst the hills. Small though it was it possessed a mayor, a swarthy, heavy-featured fellow, with beetle brows and a six-day beard, whom we found at work in a sort of office surrounded by the ballot boxes which had been used at the last election. It also boasted a little church with a parsonage adjoining it, at which we called. The priest—for this was a Roman Catholic village—received us kindly and gave us not only coffee but some excellent Serbian cigars. He spoke of the bitter coldness of the winter months when a metre of snow covers the ground and the church has to be closed, and told us that his stipend, in addition to the house, was 2,000 dinars a month—about £80 a year.

Our guide now declared himself unable to continue further, but, thanks to the good offices of the priest, a boy was found to take his place as far as Livari, and after farewells we continued on our way. Both the consul and myself were now getting into good form, and even the roughness of the track could not suppress a cheery little Serbian tune that seemed to haunt the consul and come bubbling out whenever the sun began to shine, the birds to sing or the

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end of the journey appear in sight. This was it :



At one o'clock we entered a small valley or cup in the hills in which grew a number of fine chestnut trees. Both the consul and myself remarked on the likeness of the place to Asia Minor. And the appearance of a ragged old fellow in a fez with a scarf tied round it—the orthodox Mohammedan headgear—strengthened the resemblance. He was working in a patch of most unpromising-looking ground, and at our hail straightened his back and came towards us. Although wearing the raggedest old Albanian clothes imaginable, and none too clean in himself, he greeted us with the courtesy of an equal and invited us to his hut which lay a short distance away round the shoulder of the hill. Here other members of the family met us and ushered us into the central part of the hovel, where a fire was burning and carpets were spread. The rock, against which the hut was built, formed the back wall, and its uneven surface made a rough stairway to a loft above. Crudely hewn timbers supported the roof, and

A Primitive Meal

hurdles separated the central portion from the byre on either side—pigs, goats, cattle and human beings apparently all living in the one building. A pile of quilts, rugs, and sheepskins—the family's bedding—stood in a corner. A round table with legs not more than six inches long hung, conveniently out of the way, from one of the posts. There may have been a chest for spare clothing but I did not see one. Stowed away somewhere must have been cooking pots and necessary utensils, though, with the exception of the inevitable coffee-pot standing in the embers, they were not in evidence. A kerosene tin—is there any part of the world, civilised or uncivilised, into which the kerosene tin does not find its way?—contained the water supply.

The country into which we were now penetrating was border country and inhabited by people more Albanian than Montenegrin. The change was apparent in more ways than one. Not only were the clothes different but the speech was different also. And as I discovered later, we had temporarily said good-bye to beds. The religion of the district, as in Albania, is two-fold—Roman Catholic and Moslem. Our hosts of the moment belonged to the latter faith, and, even in this remote corner, were observing Ramazan. This, however, did not prevent them from providing for our wants as far as their limited means would allow. A young girl, veiled in the Mohammedan fashion, busied herself with the coffee-making, while her brother, using the rock as a staircase, fetched down food from the loft. Soon we were attacking a substantial meal of maize-bread, eggs, and a bowl

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of warm sheep's milk, which last we drank with wooden spoons, thus finding ourselves in exactly the same position as two children we had watched with amusement on the previous day sharing their breakfast of bread-and-milk and each trying to outdo the other. The coffee, even in this poverty-stricken and remote hovel, was better than you could obtain in a first-class London hotel.

While we lunched, squatting on a striped carpet beside the smoking fire, children peeped shyly at us through the hurdles and round the lintel of the open door, while bolder, and older, members of the family ventured inside to have a good look at us. Probably none of them had ever seen an Englishman before, and we doubtless presented an uncommon and exciting spectacle.

Poor though the place was, it satisfied the artistic side of my nature, not by its mere picturesqueness, but by something else. On thinking it over I came to the conclusion that what pleased me was the home-made-ness of everything—the carpet on which we were sitting, with a pattern of black and creamy-white stripes; the pile of bedding; the clothes, coarse undyed homespun of the natural sheep's wool, worn by both men and women; even the rough-hewn beams and the solid stonework of the hut. All honest handicraft, honest art—far better art, indeed, than much which passes by the same name in the so-called artistic circles of more civilised Europe.

At length, rested and refreshed, we resumed our way. The boy guide went on ahead. The consul, humming his



CATHOLIC WOMAN OF THE KRAJNE

Arrival at Livari

gay little tune—" *Tum*, tiddle-iddle-*um*-ti-tum, tum, tum, tum, tum, tum, *tum* "—strode after him. I followed, in good fettle, and Vojn, with the rucksack on his shoulder and my F.O. letter bag under his arm, brought up the rear. The back of the day's tramp had been broken, and Livari, we thought, lay not far ahead. On the map, at all events, the distance looked a mere nothing. But what looks, on a Montenegrin map, to be a mile or two often turns out to be nearer ten, so tortuous are the mountain tracks and so deep are the valleys that have to be crossed. It was not until two or three hours later that, on rounding a spur of the mountain, we saw Livari below us.

As we descended the path which led to the village we met a young woman walking up. She was a Catholic Montenegrin-Albanian, and Vojn, who took a great interest in my sketching, stopped her and asked her to pose for me, which she very obligingly did. So there on the steep hillside I stood and drew her while the others waited. She wore a white kerchief over her head, a black-and-white striped " *struka* " (the home-woven shawl of Montenegro), an apron of white and fawn with a band of brightly coloured embroidery, Turkish trousers, thick white woollen socks, and pointed " *upankas* ". She was a very picturesque figure.

At the entrance to the village we encountered a tousled youth dressed in a tattered army tunic with American buttons. He assured us that the best house was that which belonged to his father, and pointed it out to us. It was a heavily built, strong-looking stone cottage, with stable

To the Land of the Eagle

below and living-room above. As we approached the doorway a pig rushed out, bristling with indignation at the intrusion of strangers. He was a most pugnacious pig and had to be driven off by the youth with a stout stick. I distinctly preferred his room to his company—especially indoors.

Our hearts sank as we entered. If this were really the best accommodation to be found in Livari, an uncomfortable night lay before us. The only bed was a box, black with the grime of ages, in which lay a tumbled heap of miscellaneous rags and some indescribably filthy sheepskins. The windows—though this we regarded as an advantage rather than otherwise—were unglazed, and there was no other furniture except a loom, two of the quaintest home-made chairs that ever the mind of amateur carpenter conceived, and some tubs and barrels covered with dust. While the youth went in search of his father we sat down to rest. Vojn, I noticed, had disappeared.

The owner, who presently came in, showed no signs of embarrassment at our arrival and put his house and everything in it—poor though it was—at our disposal. But as he was soon followed by Vojn, who said that he had found better quarters further along the village, we thanked him and declined the proffered hospitality. Our temporary host showed no sign of being hurt at our decision, and accompanied us with great politeness to our new abode—a tumbledown little cottage whose best bedroom was to be our lodging for the night—and, in fact, not only remained

We Arouse Suspicion

with us for most of the evening but accompanied us part of the way on our next day's tramp.

He was not the only person who took considerable interest in us and in our movements. We had not been in the village half an hour before a gendarme arrived and demanded our presence at the gendarmerie. This interest on the part of the police had first manifested itself at Virpazar, the village on the Lake of Scutari whence we had started on our walk. There the gendarmes, considering that one of us was the British consul, had been rather impertinent. And here, at Livari, the same thing seemed likely to happen. However, we went to the gendarmerie and made ourselves as pleasant as we could, and after being entertained to tea—and real tea is a luxury in Montenegro, where tea is usually an infusion of a wild plant called "pelim"—parted on the best of terms. They assured us that their anxiety on our account was only prompted by the fact that a well-known brigand had just escaped from Cetinje gaol and was believed to be hiding somewhere in the neighbourhood. The consul, however, felt certain that they had had orders from headquarters to keep us under observation.

Livari was the poorest village we had as yet stayed at. Wine and raki were scarce, and the open hospitality of the more wealthy communities was not attempted. The old dame in whose house we were quartered did, however, offer us some figs. These she produced, after much searching, from the innermost recesses of her voluminous clothing. The consul, true, I suppose, to British Foreign Office

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traditions of tact and politeness, ate his fig with every appearance of enjoyment. I dallied with mine until the crying of a baby in a wooden cradle on the hearth made the old lady look round, then, seizing the opportunity, I slipped it into my pocket and proceeded to munch an imaginary one with as much show of gusto as I could muster.

We had many callers that evening, and it was with no little relief that we got rid of the last one, for we were both tired and longing for bed. Quilts were spread on the floor, pillows and coverings of various kinds were provided, and we turned in. I had not long been asleep when I was awakened by mutterings from the consul who was sitting up in bed and—but no! delicacy forbids me to pursue the matter further. Let it suffice to say that he was up and dressed soon after daybreak swearing by all his gods that nothing would induce him to remain in the place a minute more than was absolutely necessary. For once I felt that the skinniness so often associated with the artistic professions was a matter for congratulation. It is not nearly such an attraction as the well-fed juiciness of a British consul.

The wind was howling and the rain falling in sheets as we started to climb the pass which lay between us and Bar. It was a depressing prospect at 6.30 in the morning but less depressing than the thought of remaining at Livari. Two villagers accompanied us, and Vojn, proud possessor of a revolver, scouted ahead on the look out for the brigand, about whom, however, neither the consul nor I troubled our heads. We met no brigand, nor indeed any living

The Salamander

creature except a black and yellow lizard, or salamander, which came waddling disconsolately down the streaming path and disappeared into a hole which can hardly have been less wet than the one he had been washed out of.

At eight o'clock, after a stiff climb, we reached the top of the pass. The wind was blowing a gale, and an icy rain, against which neither the consul's mackintosh nor my umbrella were much protection, penetrated our clothes and soaked us to the skin. Vojn's umbrella, one which he had borrowed from a friend in Livari, was soon inside-out and useless—a ridiculous mass of black cover and tangled iron frame. If it had been mine I should have thrown it away. Not so the careful Montenegrin. He carried the spiky bundle on to Bar and there got it repaired for the comparatively trifling sum of ten dinars. As we stood on the summit shivering and miserable, even the lizard, could he have seen the sight we presented, would have had the laugh of us. All around was a blanket of mist, cloud, and driving sheets of rain. Nothing was visible beyond ten yards or so, and what lay before us in the grey void we could only conjecture.

The situation seemed to call for something. So I got a purple hard-boiled egg from the pool of water that was doing duty as a pocket and ate it under the shelter, such as it was, of a rock. Then we had a nip of raki all round and, setting our faces to the wind and rain, we pushed on again. It says much for the consul's fortitude that even in these depressing conditions he was able to hum his little tune. I can hear it now—" *Tum* tiddle-iddle-*um*-ti-tum tum tum tum tum tum

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tum "—and see the back of his glistening waterproof as he led the way undaunted along the soaking path.

The mist as we descended became gradually less thick and the rain less heavy, but it was not until some time later, when we reached a great gorge which eventually proved to be above Stari Bar, that we could really see our surroundings. Here signs of human habitation cheered us, and we met a lad coming up the track. Soon after this a man with a pack-donkey passed us. He was taking food and drink to his cottage in the mountains to celebrate Bairam, the feast which concludes Ramazan. And then ahead of us rose a rocky height crowned with an old crumbling castle, which the consul affirmed to be the castle of Stari Bar. Our destination was in sight.

It was a grand scene. On either side precipitous mountains ran sheer down to where, far below, a torrent surged and tumbled amongst the rocks. Above our heads a huge overhanging cliff of red sandstone threatened, as it seemed, to fall and crush us at any moment. The single arch of an old Turkish bridge spanned the ravine, and, to complete the romantic touch, a flock of sheep herded by an Albanian shepherd lad straggled across it and up the slope on the further side. The picture almost compensated for the discomfort we had been enduring, and we tramped on with renewed energy. Passing on the way Moslem women washing their feet at a spring, a lad with goats, a train of pack-donkeys in the charge of brightly-attired gipsy folk, and some peasants carrying on their backs purchases just

Stari Bar

made in the Stari Bar market, we reached the entrance to the town. A few minutes later a Turkish café offered rest and refreshment, and we entered.

Stari Bar (Old Bar) is the former Antivari. It is a few kilometres inland from New Bar, the Montenegrin port, whence it can be quite easily visited by the tourist. It is a pretty little town with its main street curling round the edge of the hill and rising by a series of wide cobbled steps to the gateway of the ruined castle. On either side of the street are shops with bright blue doors and window-shutters. To the south are olive-coloured slopes and glimpses of plain and distant mountain, and to the north the precipitous crags and the gorge which I have already described.

The consul had an appointment to meet a Russian friend at New Bar, and after lunch we went there by one of the numerous Ford cars which ply for hire between the two places. The road runs through olive groves, and after seeing them I could almost believe the stories of the great age of the Stari Bar olive trees, some of which are reputed to date from the time of Christ, one in particular having the year 500 B.C. assigned to it. At New Bar we found a hotel—the Hotel Jadran (Adriatic Hotel)—and secured a good and decently furnished room. I sent my sodden garments to the kitchen to be dried and, lacking others, retired to bed. The consul went off into the mountains with the Russian and I saw no more of either until supper-time, when they re-appeared with suspiciously bulging pockets and an air of mystery. I had seen the symptoms before and was able to make a good

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guess at their afternoon's employment. The consul had brought his record for the day up to nine hours' tramping—good work over such rough country and in such weather.

On the next morning, as the consul was still mysteriously engaged with his Russian friend, I went alone into Stari Bar hoping to find the townsfolk celebrating Bairam and wearing gala dress. In this I was disappointed. Most of



MOUNTAIN FORMATION AT BAR

the shops were closed, and, but for a small market in which there seemed little on sale except lettuces and leeks, business was at a standstill. So I bethought myself of the gorge and its pictorial possibilities, and having provided myself with bread, cheese and a bottle of wine, I set out with stool and sketching gear. But the scene was on so stupendous a scale that to depict it lay far beyond my limited powers, and I found it pleasanter and more profitable to lie at ease on a flat rock listening to the roar of the cataract below, watching the passing country folk, and absorbing the beauty,

A Snatch of Song

the warmth, the sunlight, and the pure mountain air. As I lay there entranced a snatch of song reached my ear, borne on the wind from the hillside—faint yet crystal clear—



As the echoes of the last long-drawn note died slowly away and the sullen murmur of the torrent asserted itself



NEW BAR

once more, I felt that I was nearer heaven than I had ever been. It was the culminating touch, the apogee, completing everything, rounding it off like the cadence of a symphony.

By this time both the consul and myself had had our fill of walking. We therefore decided to return to Cettinje

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by train to Virpazar and thence by posta. The line, which winds its way through the mountains in a bewildering sequence of loops and spirals, was built by an Italian firm. But the project has not proved financially successful and it is doubtful whether it ever will, as the Montenegrins are too poor to develop the resources of their country, whether by agriculture or by mining, to a sufficient extent to establish any considerable export trade. The train, which runs on certain days only, is a quaint little affair consisting of engine, freight coach, passenger coach, trolley car, and a tank car. The miniature locomotive, with a wide funnel of the old-fashioned American type, bore the name "Marconi". While waiting on the station platform at Bar I made a rough sketch of it—the driver standing in his cabin meanwhile, and looking very self-conscious. Both engine and cars were marked with this device :—



There was only one class in the passenger coach—third. It reminded me of the old story about the Irish train—

A Mountain Railway

“First-class passengers, keep your seats! Second-class passengers, get out and walk! Third-class passengers get out and push!” We did not have to push, but we had, at one point, to get out and walk. This was because a large mass of rock, loosened by the recent heavy rain, threatened to shift and overwhelm the track. With the rest of the passengers, the conductor and the armed guard, we watched little Marconi bring the lightened train at a snail’s pace past the danger point. Then, all being well, we remounted and, with much puffing and snorting, resumed our way up the steep gradient. At the highest point of the line is a tunnel whose entrance arch bears a tablet to the memory of the Italian engineer who built the line, and who gave his life—so the inscription states—in doing so. Before entering the tunnel we stopped once more, not on account of any danger but merely to refresh ourselves at a little restaurant which stood by the track. The keen mountain air was conducive to appetite. The run down on the other side of the mountain range was very beautiful and took us past Boljevici village, where we had stayed a few days previously. The two old ladies who had been our hosts were standing on the steps outside their house to see the train go by, and we waved to them from the carriage window. A few minutes later we reached Virpazar.

This trip over the mountains from New Bar ought not to be missed by any tourist who is “doing” the Eastern Adriatic. He might include at the same time the journey from Cattaro up to Cetinje which I have described in an

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earlier chapter. The complete trip would be : from Cattaro to Cettinje by car or by posta ; from Cettinje to Virpazar either by the same means, or by car to Rjeka and thence to Virpazar by steamer ; then by the little railway to New Bar, and back to Cattaro either by boat or by the coast road. Or, if preferred, the other way round.

Having ascertained that a posta left Virpazar for Cettinje in an hour's time, the consul and I went to an inn for lunch, leaving to Vojn the responsibility of securing seats. The posta proved to be one of the most uncomfortable type—merely an old Red Cross waggon. I found myself boxed up inside with Vojn, the mails, a man and a small boy. The boy was sucking a lemon as a preventive against posta-sickness. Sad to say, it did not prevent. The consul, more fortunate than I, sat on the front seat with the driver and the gendarme, but on our arrival at Rjeka nobly offered to change places with me. I was stiff and sore and uncomfortable by that time and,—alas for the weakness of human nature !—accepted the offer gladly.

When we arrived at the consulate we found hot baths awaiting us—the one thing above all else that we longed for. Fresh linen and a change of clothes completed our restoration. Then, feeling thoroughly clean and comfortable for the first time for a week, we sat down to tea. To me quite as much as to the consul himself, it was a homecoming. Can I pay the hospitality of the Cettinje consulate any greater compliment ?

CHAPTER V

A Great Storm—The Unwritten Law—Podgoriča—Angling Prospects—Sharing a Room—Annoyances of Travel—My Passport—A Painful Journey—New Country—"Bogami!"—Kolašin—More Hospitality—Politics—Off Again—The Female Conscience—From Podgoriča to Scutari.



A YOUNG MUSSULMAN

THE weather was now very broken. At Cetinje it was cold and wet and wintry. One night a thunderstorm—such a thunderstorm as I have never before experienced—broke over the town. We sat in the drawing-room at the consulate almost expecting the house to tumble about our ears, so terrifying were the crashing reverberations of the thunder and so vivid the flashes of the lightning. The explosions seemed to be on the very roof, and the crackle of the electric

fluid as it ran to the ground by way of the lightning-conductor was plainly audible. But nothing untoward happened, and the storm, muttering and rumbling and echoing amongst the mountains, gradually moved away.

Although I had intended to go on to Podgoriča almost at once, I decided, in consequence of the weather conditions, to remain for a few days where I was, and it was April 30th

To the Land of the Eagle

before I made any further move. On that morning, having learnt from experience the wisdom of facing the driver, I rose early in order to make certain of getting a good place in the posta. Half an hour before the time of starting I put my things on the seat I had selected, and under the impression that it was now secure filled up the time of waiting by sketching a group of cottages. But when I returned, my things had been moved, and a smug-faced commercial traveller in a greasy suit and a two-days' beard occupied my place and declined to budge. The posta was full except for one seat in the very position I had intended to avoid, and with this I had, perforce, to be content. In a long experience of travelling in various parts of the world this is the first time I remember the unwritten law of seat reservation to have been deliberately flouted.

Sitting next to me was a woman, very old but with fine features and still good-looking. Like the boy in the Virpazar posta, she was sucking a lemon. I suppose it was intended, as the boy's lemon had been, as a preventive of sickness. But it had no more effect than had the voluble directions of the other passengers who all talked at her at once, and it was just as well that she was sitting next to the window. If one of the passengers who was facing the right way had had sense and politeness enough to offer the poor old lady his seat instead of his advice, the tragedy might have been averted.

We passed through Rjeka, and then, after crossing the foothills for several miles, came out into the plain which

Podgoriča

merges in the marsh at the lake's edge. There is talk of attempting to reclaim this marshland, and, if the reclamation can be carried out successfully, it will add many fertile square miles to Montenegro. This plain was more like English agricultural country than anything I had so far seen. In place of miniature fields hemmed in by rocks, here were broad acres of cultivable land. Wheat was well advanced and tall. Sheep and cattle found good grazing. Fields of beans filled the air with scent, and wild flowers—masses of purple, mauve and yellow—grew in profusion. It was a great contrast to the country I had left but two hours before, as was the climate, which was warm and summerlike, and, compared with the wine-like atmosphere of Cetinje, almost enervating.

We happened to arrive at Podgoriča on market day. The wide market square was full of people, all bartering,



ALBANIAN AT PODGORIČA

To the Land of the Eagle

bargaining, buying and selling. There were tall Albanians dressed in rough white homespun with black irregular stripes down the trouser-leg ; Mohammedan women in thin cotton draperies and Turkish trousers ; gipsy girls in heavy garments of black cloth and wide silver belts—a great contrast to their lightly-clad Mohammedan sisters ; stalwart Montenegrins in native costume of scarlet and gold ; Turks in fez and sagging breeches ; Serbian officers and gendarmes ; and a nondescript crowd of the unclassifiable in any old clothes and any old rags. Of them all I was most interested in the gipsies—as I then thought them, though later on I found that they were usually described as Rumanians—who reminded me of a frontier-tribe of North-West Burma called the Kachins. They were short and sturdy. Their coal-black hair hung in a heavy fringe over the forehead. A bright kerchief, generally yellow, was bound round the head and covered the shoulders. The heavy black skirt, wide at the bottom, and stiff, gave an unusual line—called, I believe, a flare—and was striped horizontally in various ways but always with an edging of white. The bodice was of black material and had a fringe of long tassels. The great silver belt, eight or nine inches wide, which was fastened under the right arm with an enormous lock, held the heavy skirt and tasselled apron in place.

Fish seemed the chief article on sale in the market. I never saw anywhere else such abundance. The carp were of enormous size, and there were trout up to four or five pounds in weight which made me wonder whether it might not be

Angling Prospects

worth some angler's while to try his luck in the Podgoriča river and in Scutari Lake. Later on I learnt that the Roman Catholic bishop of Scutari is a great angler and catches many salmon and sea-trout during the season. No one else, as far as I am aware, fishes there with a rod.

The life of the place seemed to be of the *far niente* order. Past the hotel at which I was staying stretched a broad



WASHING CLOTHES IN THE RIVER

promenade with a row of lime trees down the centre. Chairs and tables, inviting indolence, stood on the pavement and under the trees, and it was pleasant to linger there over a cup of coffee or a glass of raki and enjoy the fragrance of the limes and the balmy warmth of the air.

Beyond the promenade, misnamed the Riva, was an overgrown and untended public garden. Beyond the garden, above the roofs of the old houses, rose an exceedingly graceful minaret, white against the blue sky. The river,

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spanned by two bridges, ran through a gorge in the centre of the town. On one bank, under the cliff, a few poor shanties clustered. They were made of rough boards and kerosene tins, and housed the very poorest of the Podgoriča population. The older portion of the town was very obviously Turkish and reminded me strongly of towns in Asia Minor which I came to know only too well during my captivity there after the fall of Kut. Here were the same irregular houses with tumbling roofs and deep eaves, the same balconies supporting the overhang with rough wooden posts, the same tall poplars, and—in the market square—the same acacias. Even the smells were familiar.

At the hotel there was only one bedroom available, and it contained three beds. At this time I had not become accustomed to sharing a room with others. I still clung to the British preference for a room to myself, and in fact, preferred to pay for all three beds, which cost me 84 dinars, rather than put up with Montenegrin or Albanian companions. Even when the chambermaid pleaded on behalf of some traveller who had nowhere else to go I remained adamant. Where he slept, I said, was his own affair. Looking back, I can see that my action was snobbish and selfish, and I am glad that I learned better afterwards. On many occasions in Albania I shared a room, and I invariably found my room-mates quiet, well behaved, and friendly folk.

In case any of my readers ever happen to find themselves in Podgoriča the name of the hotel is the Hotel Europa,

Annoyances of Travel

and the proprietor speaks French. Clean sheets will be provided if asked for, and good food is obtainable in the restaurant.

When travelling, one has to be prepared for certain difficulties and annoyances. They are really part of the fun, though at the moment "fun" is not quite the word one would use. Some of these are one's own fault and due either to ignorance of the customs of the country, to an inadequate knowledge of the language, or to one's own stupidity. But by no means all. Other people as well as oneself can be intensely stupid and misleading, and, what is worse, officious. Red tape, with its attendant miseries, is no monopoly of Great Britain. One finds it all over the world, and especially the civilised world—it being essentially a product of civilisation. To this rule Jugo-Slavia is no exception. Wherever I went I had trouble over my passport. It was always detained at the gendarmerie and I often had great difficulty in recovering it. This happened first at Cetinje, but as I had made friends while there with the Governor and he had promised to telephone through to Podgoriča with orders that I should be helped in every possible way, I hoped that the trouble would not be repeated. My hope was vain.

I was bound for a place called Kolašin to which, I understood, a *posta* went, on certain days, from Podgoriča. But on what day and at what hour I could not discover. Every person I asked gave me a different answer. But the hotel proprietor, whom I afterwards found to be a most unreliable

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man in matters of this sort, finally assured me that it left at 8 in the morning on the following day. Accordingly I rose at 6.30 in order to have plenty of time to make my final arrangements and to recover my passport from the gendarmerie. But when I went there I found that the office was closed and did not open until nine. By agitated explanations, in scraps of many different languages, I contrived to make the seriousness of the situation apparent, and a military gentleman, who was sipping his morning coffee under the limes on the Riva, actually bestirred himself sufficiently to get the office opened. Someone found my passport, which immediately disappeared upstairs in the possession of an official whose chief claim to notice was an enormous flowing moustache, while I sat and kicked my heels impatiently in the hall. Half-an-hour passed. Then another man came downstairs and after searching all the rooms on the ground floor found what he wanted—the official stamp. Things seemed to be really moving. But no. Another long wait. At length, close on eight o'clock, the hour when the Kolašin posta was due to start—the moustached individual returned downstairs and presented me with my passport duly stamped. I seized it and rushed off. There was not a moment to lose. My baggage had gone on ahead and fortunately I was unencumbered. I ran through the dusty streets and across a wide square to the Post Office—the starting place—and arrived hot, breathless, and flustered, only to be told that the posta did not leave until eleven! . . . And did it leave at eleven? . . . I ask you! . . . It left

A Painful Journey

at 10.30, and it was only by sheer good luck that I happened to be in it.

I was now shut up with two gendarmes in the box-like back portion of the vehicle which was of the ambulance-waggon type and exceedingly uncomfortable. The greater part of the space was occupied by parcels of every conceivable shape and dimension, and by mail bags. The parcels kept slipping, the dirt on the windows made it difficult to see out, the gendarmes' rifles and equipment got in the way, and the rail of the folding bed which had not been removed, although now entirely unnecessary, caught me in the back. Added to this, the seat itself was narrow and very hard, and the road was rough. I looked forward to the journey with mixed feelings.

As I seemed to be the only passenger, I wondered why my request to occupy the front seat, which was empty, had been refused. The explanation came a little later when we stopped to pick up a young woman. She settled herself comfortably in the vacant place between the conductor and the driver, and it did not need the winks of the younger gendarme to make it clear to me that the driver's refusal of my application had not been entirely disinterested. This gendarme—unlike his companion, who was taciturn in the extreme—was a friendly fellow, and did everything he could for my comfort, even going so far as to extract a mail-bag from the heap, and, after beating it until the contents were almost in a state of pulp, insisting upon my using it as a cushion. Being something of a Lothario he beguiled the

To the Land of the Eagle

tedium of the way by waving and kissing his hand to every girl we happened to pass. Sometimes he shouted rough banter which was received with giggles and laughter, and at every sally he would nudge me to make sure that I appreciated the fun.

And so—bumping through pot-holes and over loose rocks, swaying from side to side, and swinging round corners—we progressed towards Kolašin, I, for my part, praying that we might arrive at our destination with the least possible delay, for I was feeling dizzy and inwardly uncomfortable and beginning to fear an attack of post-sickness. My plight presently became apparent to Lothario, who immediately, in the kindness of his heart, opened his haversack and extracted two hard-boiled eggs—relics of the late Easter festivities. These he pressed upon me. One was a sickly green, and the other a revolting magenta. I felt like a sufferer from sea-sickness confronted with the traditional plate of fat pork.

At length, towards midday, the posta stopped. We had arrived at a village of wooden, chalet-like houses unlike any I had so far seen. They took their character—as houses should—from their surroundings, for the barren limestone mountains had disappeared and in their place were grassy slopes and forests of beech and pine. It was a country of wood, and not a country of stone. The air was clear and cold, much colder than at Podgoriča, and it was evident that we had reached a considerable altitude. Summer had moved backwards and given place to early spring. Snow-ploughs

“ Bogami ! ”

still stood at the roadside, and the winter grey of the beeches was as yet hardly even tinged with green.

The conductor and the driver, deserting the lady passenger who remained immovable on the front seat, disappeared into a wine-shop. The two gendarmes ate their lunch at the roadside. I walked up and down enjoying the freshness of the air and easing my cramped limbs.

Soon, however, an impatient “ honk ” of the horn warned us that the *posta* was about to start. We climbed in again and disposed ourselves as before. I slept fitfully. Occasional peeps through the dirty windows showed a valley with a river running through it. Frequent bumps told of a road full of pockets. Notwithstanding the mail-bag, my seat grew harder and harder.

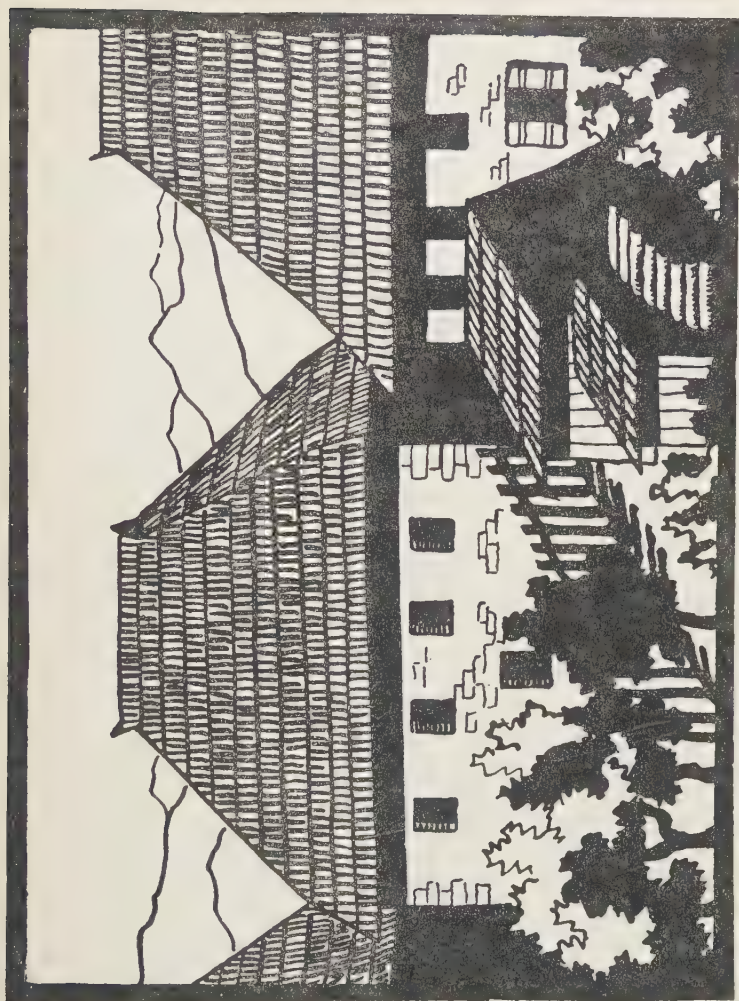
Then came another hamlet of wooden houses and another halt. We all—passengers, gendarmes, driver and conductor,—repaired to a roadside shanty where a strapping wench, deep-bosomed and wide-hipped, made us coffee and served us with *raki*. Here my friend Lothario was quite in his element, and the interchange of pleasantries between him and the lady caused much amusement and many ejaculations of “ Bogami ! ” (“ By God ! ”—the Slav equivalent, I imagine, to a certain objectionable adjective dear to Great Britain). I insisted on paying for the coffee and the *raki*. But Lothario, evidently determined not to be outdone, “ went one better ”. From some mysterious source he procured a bottle of rum, and of this everyone, willy-nilly, had to drink several tots. When I came out again into the open-air I did not care, as

To the Land of the Eagle

the saying goes, if it snowed, and my feeling of sickness had entirely disappeared.

From this point onwards the journey became much more bearable, not on account of the rum but because the lady passenger had finished her journey and left the front seat to me. The going was still bad—worse, if possible, than before—on account of the wet road being terribly cut up by timber waggons. These waggons, drawn by horses three abreast, and loaded up with logs, delayed us considerably. It was no easy matter to pass them on the narrow roadway. But eventually, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived at Kolašin.

The hospitality of the Montenegrins, to which I have referred, had already much impressed me. But at Kolašin, I received a still more surprising proof of it. The consul at Cetinje had met, some months earlier, a Kolašin man by the name of Marič and had had a quarter-of-an-hour's conversation with him. This was the full extent of the acquaintance. However, as he thought a note of introduction might possibly prove of some use he had provided me with one. I therefore asked for Mr. Marič and, a boy having volunteered to tell him of my arrival, Mr. Marič himself soon came along, outwardly calm, but wondering, no doubt, who I could be and what I could possibly want. For Englishmen are rare at Kolašin. The consul's note seemed to puzzle him, and I had to explain the situation as best I could—broken Italian being the medium of communication between us. He thereupon led me to an inn and



WOODEN ROOFED HOUSES AT KOLAŠIN

More Hospitality

ordered a room for me, and after the usual formalities over the wine-cup, departed, having told me to come round later to his store (he owned the principal store in the place) where, he said, I should find his brother, who spoke French, and his cousin, who spoke English. I then settled down at the inn, where I remained for two days, ordering everything I wanted and making myself thoroughly at home. Mr. Marič often came round to meals, and I spent a good deal of time at his shop, but it did not dawn upon me until I was on the point of leaving that he regarded me as his guest. Then, however, on asking for my bill and being unable to get it, I realised the true position of affairs. I imagine that, as he lived near his timber mill, and some little distance away from the village, he thought it would be more convenient for me to stay at the inn, and arranged accordingly. The fact of my being at the inn did not, however, release him from being my host and assuming the full financial responsibility for my stay. If a foreigner were to arrive at an English country town with a note of introduction to the principal inhabitant, would he be put up at the best hotel in the place at that inhabitant's expense for as long as he cared to stay?

From the Marič brothers I gathered a few scraps of information. The mountains there contained, they said, various metals, including lead, iron, copper and silver. Rock giving as high a percentage as 92 per cent. of lead had been found. They themselves were, however, too poor to carry out exhaustive tests, nor was there enough capital in the country to start mining operations, even on a modest

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scale. I did not point out, as I might have done, that it is one thing to have the metal and another to get it to market. The difficulty of transport in Montenegro is, I fear, an almost insuperable obstacle, and, for the time being, puts mining out of court as a commercial possibility.

On political matters they spoke guardedly, and it was more by what they did not say than by what they said that I arrived at what I imagine, rightly or wrongly, to be their point of view. It confirmed the opinion that had been slowly forming in my mind—an opinion, however, based largely on surmise and of no great value—that a considerable part of the population is restless and uneasy, and that there is a good deal of discontent with existing conditions, though how deep this discontent goes, whether it is reasonable or the reverse, and how widely spread it really is, I am unable to say.

One has to remember that Montenegro, hitherto an independent kingdom, now finds itself only an insignificant part of a very much greater kingdom. Its representation in the Jugo-Slav parliament is, though strictly in proportion to its population, very meagre, for out of some 250 deputies only eight are from Montenegro. Its influence in national affairs is therefore negligible. Many Montenegrins, in the first flush of joining the Union, doubtless forgot that this would be the case, and only now that it is too late are beginning to realise it. This may in some part explain the discontent.

My stay at Kolašin was spoilt by wet weather. Only on

Off Again

the day of my arrival did I get a chance of seeing something of its beauties. The little town lies in a valley, or rather a basin among the hills. Surrounding it is a good deal of undulating grass country which rises gradually to the pine and beech-clad slopes of the mountains—high peaks with, at this season of the year, still much snow upon them. The air is as invigorating as that of the Swiss Alps. The inn, if slightly primitive, is clean, and the people who run it are obliging and anxious to please. Those in search of a quiet holiday spot might do worse than try Kolašin, but if they will be guided by me they will travel there by car and not entrust themselves to the tender mercies of the government posta.

On the return journey, thanks to Mr. Marič, I was saved from the discomforts I had suffered on the way up. A seat in a Ford car was put at my disposal, and early one morning, in company with two women, a small boy, a number of miscellaneous parcels, and a pig, I left Kolašin. The agonised protests of the pig, which was confined in a basket strapped on behind, woke the echoes as we departed and accompanied us intermittently all the way to Podgoriča. The morning was fine, and from the seat next to the driver I had a good view of the country. For a considerable time we followed the course of the river, which flowed in a stony bed between wooded hills. Then the valley widened and the road became a serpentine which taxed the driver's skill to the uttermost. It was very greasy, too, and many a time my heart was in my mouth as we swung round an unprotected

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corner where a skid would have sent us over the edge and down to disaster on the rocks below. At a good round speed we rattled along, sending the village children flying at the sound of the horn, scattering terrified sheep, and causing consternation amongst the poultry. Men



WASHERWOMAN

seized cows by the horns and held them until the danger was over. A frisky pony showed us his quarters and let fly with both hoofs as we rushed past. At one place a pigling with his nose buried in a delicious morsel of manure suddenly became aware of our approach and leaped for the side of the road with a squeal of terror. At length we came out into more open country and saw the Lake of Scutari spread out

The Female Conscience

below us. A gradual winding descent brought us down to the plain, and soon after, with the pig announcing our arrival in strident tones, we stopped outside the Podgoriča Post Office.

The next question was how to get to Scutari, for I did not want to stay in Podgoriča another night. The landlord of the Hotel Europa assured me that there was only one way, namely to hire a car at the cost of 700 dinars. I discounted this piece of information, and eventually agreed with a young fellow who owned a Ford car to take me there for 250 dinars, the other passenger being a lady who was paying a similar sum. But feminine inconsistency betrayed me. It seemed that a car had arrived from Scutari and was returning empty. The lady, discovering this, and finding the driver quite willing to underbid the owner of the car with whom she had made the first contract, immediately closed with him, and departed to Scutari on the spot. My driver, sore at being so treated, refused to adhere to his original quotation, and, in the end, thanks to the lady's lack of conscience, I was obliged to pay 400 dinars for the journey instead of the 250 dinars that had originally been agreed upon.

As I was now leaving Montenegro and crossing over into Albania, I was prepared for some trouble at the frontier. But to my surprise my passport was examined by one of the most delightful officials I have ever had the good fortune to encounter. He got through the necessary formalities in the minimum of time, and sent me on my way with a warm

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handshake and a friendly smile. I wish that all officials were like him.

This was a good augury, and I began to hope that in Albania, at all events, I might be spared some of the delays and annoyances that the passport regulations and their enforcement in other countries had caused me. But I was soon disappointed. I should not like to say how many times my passport was demanded from that point onwards. At one place we were even stopped and made to return on our tracks for three or four miles in order to convey a gendarme to the next police post. The rain was coming down in torrents and the man had no overcoat. Had it been a request instead of an order we should not have minded so much. As it was, directly we arrived and put the fellow down he called to a companion in the hut—a beetle-browed, surly soldier—who came out and scowled over my passport and tried me with questions in German and Italian which I pretended not to understand—a useful dodge on occasion—and finally, scowling more than ever, gave me up as a bad job and allowed us to resume our journey.

The next trouble was caused by the absence of a bridge at a spot where a bridge should certainly have been. The road came to an abrupt end at an inlet of the lake, and, as not even a Ford can leap a gulf 150 yards in width, a *détour* had to be made. This took us over a rocky track amongst oak and other scrub. It was still raining hard and the rocks were slippery. We lurched along slowly at all sorts of angles. Pools of mud and water which impeded our progress

From Podgoriča to Scutari

made it necessary for me to alight and push—getting thoroughly splashed by the whizzing wheels while doing so—and when at last, after almost superhuman exertions, we gained the main road, the radiator was steaming like a house on fire, and so was I. Further on a river barred our way, but a crude ferry worked by a wire rope was plying across the deepest part. Albanians, wearing the jackets with black fringes and black woollen bosses, by which I afterwards learned to distinguish the Ghegs from the Toscs (the two main divisions of the population) waded waist-high in the stream and manœuvred us to a spot whence we were able to drive through the flood in two or three feet of water and reach the roadway on the other side.

We travelled on through level country where the fields were green with crops and gay with scarlet poppies. Here and there I saw men, in the white clothing of the Albanian peasant, carrying rifles, and I remembered the tales I had heard of Albanians working in the fields with rifles slung at their backs. The custom still survives, but only in the mountainous country north of Scutari where lawlessness is rife and weapons have to be carried for protection. Elsewhere the law forbidding the carrying of firearms is strictly enforced, and armed peasants working in the fields are no longer seen. In fact, I was told that those I saw near Scutari were probably civilian police who assist the regular police in keeping order and are only on this account permitted to carry arms.

The rain had stopped and the setting sun was shining

To the Land of the Eagle

with a lurid glow when we approached Scutari. The mountains on the other side of the lake, which adjoin the Krajne of Montenegro where I had recently been travelling, were a deep purple. The minarets and more prominent buildings of the city caught the light. The old castle slumbered on its crag. Passing through beautiful fields of blue iris we entered the town, and two or three minutes later drew up at the Grand Hotel, the hostelry at which I proposed to stay the night.



A SADDLER'S SHOP

CHAPTER VI

A Useful Shoe Sole—A Grand Hotel—A Railway Line—The Conservative Peasant—Tirana—"Plenty of English"—Ahmed Zogou—To Durazzo—The Bigamist—Diplomatic Worries—"Look for the Oil!"—Baghdadis—To Valona—The Snorer—Kanina—Fighting Malaria—Kossovare Refugees—Boring for Oil.



A HODJA

THE question "What becomes of old motor-tyres?" would probably be as difficult for the average person to answer as the Sunday-school child's query to the bishop "How many legs has a caterpillar got?" The average person, however, has not been to Scutari. If he had, he would answer without hesitation "They are sent to Albania and made into shoe-soles."

The cobblers' shops in the Scutari bazaar are piled high with used tyres—knobbed, grooved and studded—either whole or cut into convenient lengths. And the shoes themselves, thus soled, are strong and serviceable—if not particularly elegant—and are at the same time almost as pliable as the native upanka. It seems an excellent way of using up old rubber.

The Grand Hotel, Scutari, is grand only in name. My bedroom was next door to a malodorous lavatory, but I insisted on clean sheets and got them—and that was something.

To the Land of the Eagle

When I came down in the morning to get a cup of coffee before leaving for Tirana, I found the waiter asleep in the "coffee-room" with the remains of last night's supper on the uncleared tables and every window tightly shut. The noise I made in rushing to open something and save myself from immediate asphyxiation woke him up, and he arose from his bed—to strain a simile to its utmost limits—like Aphrodite from the waves, completed a scanty toilet with the aid of a comb, and attended to my modest requirements in the way of breakfast. At seven the car came and I departed, nothing loth.

The car was a nine-seater, and the other passengers, including several Roman-Catholic priests, were going by it to San Giovanni di Medua, whence a steamer connection is maintained with Bari, the Italian seaport on the opposite side of the Adriatic. *Rome—Bari—San Giovanni di Medua* is the direct route to Albania, and I was accordingly surprised to find the place so small and insignificant. It contained little more, as far as I could see, than a tiny wharf, a custom-house, a police post, and a few single-storied shacks—mostly coffee-houses—along the waterfront. The bay being very shallow, the steamer was anchored some distance out, and passengers had to be taken aboard by shore boats. But San Giovanni di Medua is no worse in this respect than the other ports of Albania, Durazzo, Valona, and Santi Quaranta, which all suffer, as I found later, from the same drawback. In none of these places is the water deep enough to allow a vessel to lie at the quay.

A Railway Line

As no one but myself wanted to go on to Tirana I was put with the mails into an ordinary four-seater Ford car and continued the journey alone save for the driver. The country was well wooded with oak, ash, poplar, willow and alder. The fields were enclosed with hedges of bramble and, but for the big wild fig-trees, I might almost have been in England. I had been told that I should find in Albania no bank, no water-closet, and no railway, but as regards the railway I found this statement incorrect, for a narrow gauge track ran at the side of the road most of the way from Scutari to Tirana. It did not, however, appear to have been used for a considerable time as it was in bad repair and much broken. At one place, half-a-dozen little locomotives, dismantled and red with rust, stood idle on a siding, while in a ditch a short distance away lay a seventh—a pathetic corpse in a winding-sheet of bramble and convolvulus. Presumably the line was wrecked by the Austrians when they were in retreat at the end of the war. I should not imagine that it would be a very costly matter to put it into working order again.

The impression I received in the course of this drive was that the surrounding country was exceedingly fertile, and that much which is at present uncultivated could be made productive if modern agricultural methods were adopted. In all countries the farmer and tiller of the soil—conservative to the backbone—is slow to admit that his way of doing things can be bettered, and to this general rule the Albanian agriculturist is no exception. He knows nothing, and wants

To the Land of the Eagle

to know nothing, of new methods. I heard of one instance in which a young and progressive Albanian of the wealthy classes (landowners who lease their land to the peasant in



ANCIENT AND MODERN

return for one-third of the crop) brought back with him from Western Europe some of the latest agricultural machinery, intending to start scientific farming. He at once found himself up against not only the conservatism of the peasant but the conventions of his class—no *gentleman*

Tirana

soils his hands with work!—and in the end his project had to be abandoned. Since the wealth of every country comes in the first instance from the soil, this attitude of mind is to be deeply deplored. All possible means of making the soil more productive should be welcomed.

Tirana, the Albanian capital and seat of government, is not a particularly impressive place. Its chief claim to notice, politics apart, lies in its mosques, which are all very beautiful examples of old Byzantine architecture and decoration. The streets are of rough cobbles—very uncomfortable to the feet—and the houses are, for the most part, of one storey only. The shops are the rickety wooden boxes one expects to find in this part of the world, and their proprietors sit, in Turkish fashion, at the receipt of custom.

I lunched soon after my arrival at the Hotel Internationale, which is the centre of the political life of the place. It is frequented by the deputies and their friends, and discussion and argument go on all day long over the coffee-cup and the raki glass. While I was struggling with the menu, which was Greek to me, a lady, seeing my difficulty, spoke to me in English and offered her assistance. She was an American and we got into conversation. One of the first things she said was, "You will find plenty of English here". I was astonished. That there was a British Legation at Durazzo I knew, but that Tirana contained "plenty of English" was news to me. Nor did it seem a place to attract the tourist. The meeting with the American did not surprise me so much, as I knew that there were American

To the Land of the Eagle

missionaries in the country and an American technical school in Tirana. But I found that the lady was right. Later in the day I met eight English people—six men and two women—and doubtless there were others whom I did not meet. Five of the men were British officers, and their business was, I was told, the reorganisation of the Albanian gendarmerie. The other was a commercial gentleman who was making a short visit connected with oil. This latter fact, in conjunction with the knowledge that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had recently acquired a concession from the Government, gave me food for thought.

Tirana, like the capital of every other Balkan country, is a hotbed of intrigue, and I wondered whether my compatriots as well as the Americans, might not be there largely as a set-off to the political activities of Serbia, Greece and Italy. For years past Albania has been in a thoroughly unsettled state, revolution following revolution. But the present Government, under the presidency of Ahmed Zogou, seems to be rather more firmly established. I gathered, however, that a counter-revolution, financed from the other side of the Adriatic, might occur at any time—though a year has passed since then and no revolution has as yet materialised. This absence of trouble is, I fancy, largely attributable to the influence of the British Minister, who is on excellent terms with the president and the deputies, and very highly thought of and respected by Albanians in general.

Ahmed Zogou is still in the early thirties. He is a strong

Ahmed Zogou

man and consequently has enemies, and several attempts have already been made upon his life. The story goes that on one occasion he was shot at and wounded in two places whilst presiding at a sitting of the Chamber. Taking his revolver from his pocket he placed it on the table in front of him and proceeded with the business in hand—whereupon



FETCHING WATER

the deputies as one man rose to their feet with arms up-raised. They were taking no chances.

The Hotel Internationale being full, I obtained quarters at the Hotel Continental. This is the hotel fancied by the English and is run on modern lines. It even possesses that extreme rarity, a bathroom—probably, with the exception of one at the British Legation, the only one in

To the Land of the Eagle

Albania. The charge for a bath is equivalent to 2s. 6d.—a large sum of money in those parts—and it takes the combined efforts of the hotel staff the whole day to get the water hot. So at least I was told by a resident. I found the hotel quite comfortable, and anyone visiting Tirana can stay there without hesitation. It is the most up-to-date hotel in the country.

I was invited to breakfast on the following morning with the colonel who had charge of this reorganisation business. He was going to Durazzo and had kindly suggested that I might accompany him. After a very acceptable real English breakfast we left in the inevitable Ford, and a run of an hour and a half, through what a rider to hounds at home would call "good hunting country," brought us to Durazzo. The president happened to be staying there, and on this account the town was very full. As there was no accommodation available at the hotel, the British Minister took pity on me and very kindly put me up at the Legation, where, needless to say, I was infinitely more comfortable than I should have been elsewhere. I had previously written and told him that I was coming, and had asked him, incidentally, whether it would be possible for him to give me introductions to native Albanians, so that I should have an opportunity of seeing something of their home life. This request, however, he felt himself unable to accede to, and explained his refusal by telling me how he once had been deceived by a plausible Englishman who came to him with a similar request and afterwards cashed £150 worth of bogus

The Bigamist

cheques at the expense of his Albanian hosts. On another occasion he entertained a man who seemed to be a gentleman in every sense of the word—charming, cultured, and a delightful companion. “He,” said the Minister solemnly, and looking at me very hard, “turned out to be a *bigamist*!” Although I hastened to assure him that so far from possessing a plurality of wives I had not even one, the look in his eye seemed to suggest that he still considered it quite likely, however much I might maintain the contrary, that I had a well-stocked harem hidden away somewhere. A little later on it unhappily transpired that I had no dress clothes with me—for it had not occurred to me that they would be required on such a trip as I was taking. This, of course, looked highly suspicious. But when, having received an invitation to dine at the Greek Legation, it became necessary to leave cards and I was obliged to confess that I possessed no visiting cards either, my stock slumped so heavily that, looking back, I wonder I was not immediately turned out of the Legation neck and crop.

But, joking apart, I am very grateful for the hospitality which, in spite of my lamentable failure to attain the high standards called for in diplomatic circles, continued to be extended to me, and my memories of my stay in Durazzo as the guest of the British plenipotentiary are of the pleasantest. It was during this period, too, that I became dimly aware of the fact that we outsiders, we men in the street—men without dress clothes and without visiting cards—know very little of the work that is carried on in such quarters.

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The responsibilities of the Minister and his subordinates, especially in such a storm-centre as the Balkans, are heavy, and important issues may, and often do, depend upon the tact with which difficult situations are handled. Even while I was at Durazzo I was aware of an atmosphere of suspense. They were worried about something. The Minister was *distrain*, so was the consul, and so was the colonel from Tirana who strode about with wrinkled forehead and lowering brows. In fact, I felt constrained to apologise for turning up at what appeared to be an inopportune moment.

"Don't apologise," said the Minister. "If you had arrived six weeks ago it would have been a different matter. Then, I confess, it would have been inconvenient, but at the moment it is quite all right."

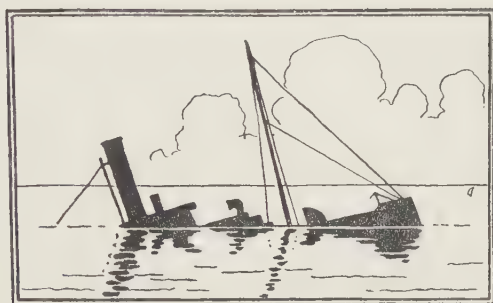
What had been the situation six weeks previously? I wondered, but of course I could not ask. The Minister, however, volunteered the information that the work was then so heavy and so urgent that frequently the whole Legation staff were up all night coding and de-coding the telegrams that passed continually between the Legation and the Foreign Office.

"If the newspapers had known what was going on," he said, "they would have been tumbling over one another to be first with the news. The crisis was so acute that at one time Mussolini actually did threaten to inform the Press of Europe. And then," he added, "the fat would have been in the fire. And yet people who know no better talk against

“ Look for the Oil ! ”

secret diplomacy ! ” And this was the only sidelight that escaped him.

Nowadays, in order to get at the bottom of international complications it is a good plan to “ look for the oil ”. And I have not much doubt that oil was the root of the trouble referred to. Presumably Great Britain, Italy, and perhaps also the United States, were striving to obtain concessions from the



A DURAZZO WAR MEMORIAL

Albanian Government. How serious the quarrel was, and how it was ultimately settled, I can only conjecture. I met, later on, however, both Italian and British mining engineers and learned that preparations were being made by both to begin boring operations, and from this I concluded that some sort of compromise had been arrived at.

From the point of view of the tourist there is not much of interest to be found at Durazzo with the exception of the old

To the Land of the Eagle

city wall which at one time completely encircled the town and is still, in many places, in good preservation. No one knows its age. The local people assert that it is Venetian, but, as flat brick figures largely in its construction, it is more probably Roman. At the present time roads pass through ragged gaps in the masonry, and houses, of which the British Legation is one, are built in, and on, the ramparts. A small colony of Arabs—Baghdadi by their caste marks—inhabit one of the bastions. One wonders how they came there. In the town there is also a gipsy quarter, as in most other Albanian towns. The gipsies are a peace-loving folk, asking no more than a quiet life with not too much work and plenty of music and dancing. They are, in fact, Bohemians *par excellence*.

I trespassed on the hospitality of the Durazzo Legation for three days and then went aboard the boat for Valona in the company of a King's Messenger, the consul's wife and family, the gentleman who had come out after oil and was now returning to England—whether satisfied or dissatisfied I did not trouble to enquire—and some other of my fellow countrymen whose acquaintance I had recently made.

Durazzo looked exceedingly attractive from the sea. The glittering water was that marvellous shade of blue which is peculiar to the Adriatic. Boats with patched and tattered triangular sails plied between the ship and the shore. The little town of white and yellow houses, bathed in sunlight, lay at the foot of the island-like promontory on which

To Valona

it is built. Landwards, fading into a purple haze, stretched the flat marsh. In the far, far distance were the mountains, a rugged line faintly discernible against the background of sky.

The voyage, which took the greater part of the day, was uneventful, and brought us to Valona the same evening two hours late—though that, as things go hereabouts, is considered punctual. The town is a mile or more distant from the port, and as one of the Albanian Ministers was a disembarking passenger, a large crowd of his supporters met the boat and commandeered every available vehicle for themselves and for him. In consequence a young Italian business man and I found ourselves stranded at the port with our baggage, and it was an hour and a half before we were able to secure a *carozza* and set out for the town. At the Hotel Gambino, which appeared to be the principal hotel, our arrival was met with apologetic shrugs and the statement “*tutto occupato*” (Italian being largely spoken in Valona). And not only so, but we were assured in addition that every house in the town was in a similar position on account of the Minister’s visit and the approaching elections. However, we dined, and after dinner raised the question again, whereupon the proprietor made me a speech which began “*Comme vous êtes anglais*,” and stated, as far as I could gather, that a man sitting at the next table had a room which contained two beds, and on account of my nationality had graciously consented to allow me to occupy the empty one. This I did—and hardly slept a wink all

To the Land of the Eagle

night owing to the prodigious snoring of my room-mate. I have never heard such an organ-pipe of a snore, or such an alarming accompaniment of grunts, wheezes, and explosive

noises of every imaginable kind. To make matters worse—if anything could have been worse—there was a stork's nest on the corner of the roof immediately above us, and the storks replied to the sounds beneath by clashing their beaks like a watchman's rattle.

The snorer, I afterwards discovered, was an Italian visiting Valona in connection with war-graves—or that at least was the ostensible reason of his presence. Personally I think he was a political agent.

Valona, which is a town of considerable size, has an Italian look, and owes, indeed, much both to Italian and to



A TOSC

Austrian influence. The Austrians occupied it for some time during the war. It possesses a light railway which is still in partial use, though to what extent and for

Kanina

what distance from the town I was not able to ascertain. In the town itself there is not a great deal to see. The surrounding country, however, is very beautiful and, when I was there, was bright with wild flowers of kinds unknown to Great Britain. One flower in particular grew on the hills in great profusion. At first glance it resembled a wild rose, but on a closer examination I found it was more like an anemone.

A pleasant walk from Valona is to the hill village of Kanina (an hour and a half up, one hour down). The road lies at first through groves of ancient olives where swarthy, white-fezzed shepherds lie in the shade watching their flocks. The tinkling of the sheep-bells makes pleasant music, and flowers fill the air with scent. Beyond the olive groves the road ascends through open country covered with heath and bracken. At intervals sturdy peasant folk come striding down the hill with poles across their shoulders from which hang dripping bags of "kos" (elsewhere called "yaghourt")—the delicious curdled cream of the Near East. Now one meets a man on a donkey—often a very small donkey and a very large man—now a boy in charge of goats. And at every turn of the road there are fresh views. Below lies Valona with its mosques and minarets and its mile of straight white road running out to the port. Beyond stretches the Adriatic, broken here and there by promontories and islands. Above are the castle-crowned heights of Kanina and the houses of the village which tumble confusedly down the spur of the hill as if some giant hand had poured them there.

To the Land of the Eagle

The village, which is the birthplace of the wife of the national hero, Skanderbeg,—its only claim to notice, picturesqueness apart—possesses no inn or wine-shop, and I looked for refreshment in vain. It was a hot day and the walk up the hill had made me thirsty. Some men who met me in what I suppose was the market place, or centre of the village, gave me Turkish delight, good of its kind but hardly what I wanted after my climb in the hot sun, and with that I had to be satisfied. The village gave every sign of being an extremely poor one and many of the houses were in ruins. There was a school in which sat a row of small boys all wearing their white fezzes, for the Moslem headcovering is worn both indoors and out. The castle I did not inspect. It looked more interesting from a distance, a remark which applies to Kanina as a whole.

The bane of Valona, as at Durazzo and elsewhere on the coast, is the mosquito, and the inhabitants of the district are great sufferers from the malaria it carries, as well as from other diseases connected with or due to malaria. Certain philanthropic English people—of whom one of the most active is the Dowager Countess of Carnarvon, who has a small house at Valona—are doing what they can, with the limited funds and limited opportunities available, to help the local Albanians to fight the trouble. They have imported two nurses and three V.A.D. girls. The nurses work at the local hospital. The V.A.D. girls—voluntary helpers—superintend the measures which are being taken to treat, with petroleum and otherwise, the breeding and hibernating

Kossovari Refugees

places of the mosquitoes. The mayor of Valona, whom I met several times, is a progressive man, and has given much assistance by providing labour for cleaning out and filling ditches and so forth. He was also, I believe, successful in persuading the Government to pay some portion, at all events, of the nurses' salaries. Apart from this, however, the financial responsibility is borne by contributors to "The Albanian Fund," which, in addition to providing help for the sufferers from malaria, attempts also to aid the Albanian refugees who are constantly arriving in a state of destitution from that portion of Serbia which at one time belonged, and, in the opinion of many, should still belong, to Albania. These unfortunate people are called Kossovari. The following extract from a copy of a report that was given to me by Lady Carnarvon is typical :—

"On arriving at Durazzo I visited a group of Kossovari who were scattered in villages one or two hours away. Their condition was most pitiable. Many had died of malaria, numbers of the survivors were sick—I found in one house six, in another nine out of a family of eleven, prostrate on the ground. Some were able to work, but there was no work to be had, for the summer work was over. If it had not been for the maize given by the American Red Cross, they would have died—and the maize was coming to an end."

The story of the Kossovari refugees as set out in the report throws a painful light on the pitiable position of

To the Land of the Eagle

this Albanian "minority"—unfortunately not the only "minority" in the Balkans. The League of Nations does, I understand, attempt to protect these unhappy victims of the arbitrary re-arrangement of boundaries, but whether with success or otherwise I cannot say.

A curious thing was told me at Tirana with relation to the prevalence of malaria there at the present time. According to the inhabitants, the disease was entirely unknown before the Italian occupation during the war, and they consequently declare that it was introduced by Italians who were malarial subjects.

I had intended to leave Valona for Corfu by a boat of the Puglia Line which was due to arrive on a certain Tuesday and to sail at 4 p.m. After packing my suitcases I discovered that she was twenty-four hours late and would not be in until the following day. The young Italian with whom I had shared a *carozza* upon arrival, and who was sailing by the same boat, merely gave his shoulders an amused shrug and resumed his game of cards with the landlord and his son. Other intending passengers, to whom, perhaps, such an incident seemed nothing unusual, accepted the enforced delay with calm, and I had to do the same. It, however, gave me the opportunity of a more thorough exploration of the town, and also enabled me to lunch with three of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's men, two of whom had just arrived in Valona. The third, whom I already knew, had been in the country for some time and was now living in camp out at the port. From them I learned that

Boring for Oil

machinery—timber, boilers, engines, and drilling apparatus—was at that moment on its way out, and that they hoped, with luck, to get the rig into position and begin the actual boring operations before the end of the year. The drilling, however, would be a long process, and it would be many months before they could hope to know whether their work would prove profitable or merely money and energy thrown away. Such are the uncertainties of boring for oil.

CHAPTER VII

Corfu—Approach to the Harbour—An Ingenious Device—We Start for the Achilleion—Pontikonisi and the Nuns' Island—A Curious Head-Dress—A Greek Royalist—A Question of Politics—Ginger-beer at Kanoni—The Nocturnal Corfiotes—The Hated Italians—The "incidents" of 1923—A Happy Idea—Kikeriku—The Sequel—The Patron Saint—Priestcraft—A Psychological Problem—Loquats—Pedestrian Excursion in a Carriage—"Engleesh verree good!"—"There is always a something!"—At the Well—More Exercise.



CYPRESSES

CORFU! One of the beauty spots of the world—home of the Homeric legend (does not the very ship of Ulysses, turned to stone by Poseidon, lie off the north of the island for all doubters to see?)—scene of many a bloody battle and siege—owned at different times by Corinthians, Spartans, Athenians, Macedonians, Romans, Neapolitans, Sicilians, Franks and Venetians—governed by the British during the Napoleonic era—restored to Greece by Gladstone in 1864—and, more recently, victim of one of the most cowardly outrages in modern history, when the town was shelled by the Italian fleet in revenge for the murder of the Italian boundary commissioners on the Greco-Albanian border in the summer of 1923.

Approach to the Harbour

I had heard so much about its beauties that, although it was to Montenegro and Albania that I had really come, I could not resist the temptation to snatch a few days and cross the straits to the island. I was well rewarded, and in the end stayed there for a fortnight.

We sailed from Valona at midnight, and when I looked out of the cabin porthole in the early morning I found we



APPROACHING CORFU

were anchored off Santi Quaranta. It seemed a dreary little place—merely a row of small houses and shacks backed by barren hills. Unloading operations took some hours, and the morning was well advanced before we left for Corfu, of which the coastline was visible at no great distance. The scene as we approached Corfu harbour was exceedingly beautiful, and the colouring—blues, greys, violets, mauves and purples—was magnificent. To starboard of the boat rose a mountain crowned by a monastery—a mere white

To the Land of the Eagle

speck. Its bulk, together with the sky above it, was reflected in the water, but broken up into a thousand rainbow scintillations. Its sides were clothed with olive and cypress. Away to the southward stretched the mountains of the mainland of Greece, the long, low coastline of the island,



CLOUDS ON THE MOUNTAINS

and the sea—indescribably and unutterably blue. Ahead lay the town, dominated by the citadel, its ochre buildings standing out sharply from the rugged hills and olive-covered slopes behind.

As we came to anchor, with a great rattling of donkey-engine and out-running of cable, boatmen and touts, clamorous for the job of bringing passengers and baggage

An Ingenious Device

ashore, put off from the wharf. With some difficulty we weathered the hubbub. The usual formalities with passport officials and excisemen caused a little unavoidable delay, but at last I secured a carriage, my suitcases were put in, gratuities were distributed to all and sundry, and off I drove through the sun-bathed streets of Corfu town.

I found comfortable quarters at the Pension Suisse for the equivalent of 6s. per day, including board. The whole place was scrupulously clean. It was, however, tucked away amongst tall houses and had no outlook or view such as the Hotel Angleterre boasts and, incidentally, charges for. Compared with those in which I had been staying of late, my quarters were luxurious in the extreme, and I immediately became the complete tourist. The proprietors spoke French and English ; indeed, I found one or other of these languages spoken in all the shops, hotels and cafés in the town. The intending visitor need therefore feel no anxiety on the score of language. Money need not worry him either, as here, unlike Albania, there are banks where circular notes and letters of credit can be cashed—though the process is exceedingly slow, the banking officials and clerks apparently being overcome by the lassitude induced by the climate.

The currency is Greek and consists chiefly of very dirty half-notes of five and ten drachmæ—actual value, of course, two-and-a-half and five. The observant traveller will remark that it is the left portion of the note which is in circulation and never the right, the right half having had to be, at some

To the Land of the Eagle

time when the Government needed funds, handed in to a bank in exchange for government bonds. It was an ingenious method of halving at one stroke the amount of paper money in circulation.

The metal currency consists in the main of coins of an almost infinitesimal value, ten going to the drachma (at the time of writing 400 to the English £), made of some very light metal or alloy resembling aluminium. The lowest coin of a country is said to be an infallible index to the level of poverty reached. Judged by this standard the poorer portion of the Greek population must be poor indeed.

One morning—a lovely May morning of blue sky and sunshine—I set out with the head of the Police School, an Englishman to whom I had had an introduction, through the southern suburbs of Corfu to walk to Gastouri and visit the Achilleion—the former Kaiser's palace. Passing along the promenade which skirts the bay, whence one has a fine view of the Fortezza Vecchia, or citadel, we took the road to Kanoni, amongst white and yellow villas buried in gardens of palm, aloe, bougainvillea, roses, and wistaria. The air was sweet with the scents of orange, honeysuckle and other blossoms. The pointed spires of cypresses towered above the olives—olives of great age, with trunks knotted and full of holes. Cottagers worked in their patches of garden. Cows stood contentedly in the deep pasturage. On the rockier ground goats browsed. Away on the lagoon fishermen were tending their nets.

Pontikonisi and the Nuns' Island

We came out from the olive-groves on to the lagoon-edge and, rounding a corner, saw before us the two celebrated islands—the Nuns' Island with its modest little church and tiny red-roofed cottages, and Pontikonisi with its monastery and pointed cypresses. Pontikonisi is held by some to be the ship of Ulysses, whereas others favour the claims of the rival islet off the northern coast which, to tell the truth, much more nearly resembles a ship than does Pontikonisi. Behind the two islands, fading away into the blue distance, stretched the southern portion of Corfu. On the far horizon the mountains of Greece were faintly visible. The nearer Greek coastline was hidden by the promontory of Kanoni.

A ferryman rowed us across the lagoon entrance and we continued our walk up a hillside splashed with the scarlet of poppies and the purple of a very beautiful variety of pimpernel which grows in profusion all over the island. Broom in full flower struck a vivid note of yellow, as did the ubiquitous sage plant. The path ran through terraced olive groves giving delightful glimpses of sea and mountain, and eventually brought us out on to the Gastouri road just below the village. Postponing our visit to the Achilleion, we went to a little inn calling itself the Hotel L'Europe and, in a garden overgrown with wild flowers and shaded by loquat trees laden with fruit, lunched at our leisure.

Gastouri is celebrated for the good looks of its women and for the beauty of the local costume. The native dress, however, is only worn on Sundays and feast-days, and we did not see it. The married women, as they do elsewhere

To the Land of the Eagle

in the island, encircle their heads with an enormous roll of extra hair bound with red ribbon. This curious adornment—let me resist the obvious pun!—is an heirloom, and consists of hair which at one time belonged to a grandmother or other female ancestor. It is as much a visible sign of the married state as the ring is with us.



MARRIED WOMAN, GASTOURI

The chief feature of the village is a very old well surrounded by enormous plane trees of unknown antiquity. Here we watched the Gastouri girls coming for water, dawdling at the well's edge, and departing homeward with great jars of shining pottery—successors to the amphoræ of classical times—balanced on their heads. The painter in search of a subject, in whatever part of the world he may happen to be, can always find one at a well.

A Greek Royalist

As to the Achilleion, the palace itself is not particularly remarkable either inside or out, but the gardens are fine and the view is superb. No more magnificent site could be conceived, and we may take it that the Empress Elizabeth knew what she was about when she chose it. The grounds run down to the sea, and a bridge crossing the coast road gives access to a jetty and a private bathing place. The Kaiser acquired the property from the Empress, whether by gift or purchase I do not know, and lost it during the war, when it fell into the hands of the Greek Government. The place is at present unoccupied. It would make an excellent hotel, and I wonder that some enterprising company has not yet exploited it.

Leaving the Achilleion we pushed on by gardens, olive groves, and rough hillside until we reached the hamlet of Benizza where my companion had friends. We found our hosts having tea on a terrace which overlooked the sea. An olive tree gave shade and a vast mass of creeping geranium gave colour, and a more ideal spot for a tea-table it would be impossible to find. The conversation touched on politics—always a burning question in the Balkans—and I gathered that the owner of the house was an ardent royalist. He held very strong views, too, on the adjustment of the boundaries between Albania and Greece, maintaining that the present boundary is unfair. Epirus, he asserted, was, and ought to have remained, Greek. The murder of the Italian boundary commissioners which brought such a heavy reprisal upon Corfu was, according to him, committed by inhabitants

To the Land of the Eagle

of the district who, resenting having been handed over to Albania, chose this way of making their resentment plain. It was mere chance that the murdered men were Italians, and there was just as little truth in the statement of the Greeks that the Italians had deliberately arranged the murders in order to give themselves an excuse for seizing Corfu as there was in the assertion of the Italians that the Greek Government was alone responsible. The conversation brought home to me the fact that the work of boundary commissioners is by no means easy. They are always an object of suspicion, and, no matter how hard they try, they cannot please everybody.

Another point to which my host drew attention was that during the war the safe harbourage afforded by the straits between Corfu and the mainland was of very great use to the fleets of the Allies. Now, however, that a large stretch of coast immediately opposite Corfu has become a part of Albania—a small country through which a hostile army could march without interruption—the value of Corfu as a base for warships has been greatly reduced, if not destroyed altogether. I confess that I could not follow my host's argument, for, in so far as the anchorage of warships is concerned, it seems to me to make small difference whether the land on the opposite side of the strait is nominally a part of Albania or a part of Greece.

Our homeward way lay along the coast road, through olive groves and over open hillsides starred with wild flowers. As the sun neared the horizon, the sea and the mountains

Ginger-beer at Kanoni

of Epirus took on the most marvellous shades of colour, and I could believe, as my companion assured me, that some of the greatest painters had admitted themselves baffled in the attempt to represent adequately Corfu scenery and Corfu colouring. The Island of Pontikonisi glowed in the sunset light, and its tall cypresses, usually so black,



PONTIKONISI

shot heavenward like green flames. The tiny chapel and the few cottages that cover the sister islet were tinged with warm shades of rose-pink. The waters of the lagoon mirrored every tone of the sky.

We were ferried back to Kanoni, where we lingered in an arbor and drank ginger-beer. Then we strolled slowly homeward in the twilight, reaching Corfu town late in the

To the Land of the Eagle

evening after one of the most delightful walks that could ever fall to one's lot.

Ginger-beer is a survival from the time of the British administration which ended more than sixty years ago. The Victorian habit of closing all windows at night—night air being considered poisonous—is another. At sunset all the windows at the Pension Suisse were religiously closed and shuttered, including those of my bedroom which, as the weather was quite warm, I promptly opened again, and kept open. A more satisfactory legacy from the British occupation is the game of cricket, which is popular to this day.

There are only two months in the year in which the weather is really hot, and only two of so-called winter. Bathing is possible from April to November. At the beginning of May I found the water quite warm, although the Corfiotes think it madness to venture in before July. In the summer the inhabitants close their shops and places of business during the middle of the day. But at five in the afternoon the town wakes up again and the whole population turns out into the cafés, the squares, the streets, and the esplanade. Here the folk stroll about, or sit at tables under the trees drinking coffee or Greek brandy, until ten or eleven o'clock at night when they go home to supper. They are fond of dancing. In the dance season they dance for many nights in succession, and no dance breaks up until seven or eight in the morning. They have also a theatre to which a company from Athens or Rome occasionally comes. On these nights the play begins at what is

The Hated Italians

optimistically called on the bills " 9.30 exact ", which means about 10.15, and continues, with long intervals between the scenes, until towards 2 a.m. Before the outrage (or, in diplomatic language, " incident ") a certain Italian opera



GREEK REFUGEES CARPET WEAVING

company used to come regularly to Corfu and play to crowded houses. It has been once since—and only once. . . . The theatre was empty.

The Italians are, indeed, exceedingly unpopular in Corfu, and it will be a long time before the natural resentment felt

To the Land of the Eagle

at the high-handed and unpardonable action of the Italian admiral is forgotten. I was given the entire history of the affair by English people who were on the spot at the time. My friend, the head of the Police School, happened to be in England, and it was well for him that he was, as his study was wrecked by a shell at a time of day when he would otherwise certainly have been in it. The school, which stands in the old fortress—old in spite of its name, Fortezza Nuova—was made the first target by the Italian gunners, partly because it offered a large and easy mark, and partly out of spite because the school had recently been taken out of Italian hands and put in charge of an Englishman; but the students happened to be at lectures in the basement and so, fortunately, escaped casualties. The school building itself was badly knocked about, though where the shells struck the actual masonry of the old fortress they made but little impression. I presume that they were what is technically known as “common shell” and not lyddite or high explosive. It was in the citadel, or Fortezza Vecchia, on the opposite side of the harbour that the casualties occurred. A number of Greek refugees were the victims, thirteen being killed by one shell and two so badly wounded that they died shortly after.

Tragic though the affair was, it was not without its humorous side. The admiral, having by his bombardment put the fear of God, as he imagined, into the Corfiotes, and thinking, possibly, that he had gone rather too far, now cast about for some means to propitiate them, and hit upon the

Kikeriku

happy idea of sending his ship's band ashore to play upon the esplanade. The Corfiotes, however, showed a lack of appreciation that must have cut the poor admiral to the heart. Instead of turning out in full force to listen to the music so kindly provided, they kept closely within doors, and the ship's band wasted its sweetness on the desert air.

As an example of fatuous condescension and an entire lack of the sense of proportion, this action of the admiral must surely be hard to beat. It is on a par with another act of Italian sailors in 1919, when both Italian and British warships were still anchored in the Corfu roadstead. At this time, as they do even yet, the Italians coveted the island, and some men from the fleet actually went so far as to set up a large wooden cock on the top of the Fortezza Nuova which bore the words

When this cock crows kikeriku,
Then the Italians leave Corfu.

This was tantamount, of course, to saying that they never intended to leave at all.

The young men of Corfu hereupon provided themselves with small wooden toys which made a noise like the crowing of a cock, and these they proceeded to blow whenever they met an Italian officer or sailor ashore. This aroused intense indignation in the bosoms of the insulted Italians, who then promulgated a decree threatening the toy-blowers with the direst penalties (one suspects that black shirts and a sense of humour do not go together), but before they were able to put the decree into effect they had, owing to pressure,

To the Land of the Eagle

I suppose, on the part of Great Britain and others of the Allies, to withdraw from Corfu. This gave the Corfiotes an opportunity they were not slow to seize, and the Italian ships weighed anchor to a serenade of ironical cock-crowing from a fleet of boats full of triumphant and delighted townsfolk.

Now comes the sequel to this story. In 1923, at the time of the "incident", these cock-crowing toys turned up again, a man in the town putting a large number of them on sale in the market. At first sight it looked like a mere matter of business—the grasping of an opportunity for the disposal of a stock of the toys regardless of possible consequences. But the British acting vice-consul—for at that time there was no consulate—suspected that things were not quite what they seemed, and that more lay beneath than appeared on the surface. He saw quite clearly to what the sale of the toys might lead with the Italian ships in the harbour and the admiral in such a truculent mood, and after instituting enquiries had the man arrested and his stock of toys seized, thereby averting the obvious danger.

The toy vendor was an *agent-provocateur*, and the interesting question arises—Who was responsible for his presence in the town? It is a question that readers may prefer to try to answer for themselves.

The withdrawal of the Italian fleet and the fact that no actual residents of the town (all those killed were refugees from the mainland) were touched by the bombardment were attributed by the majority of the people to the miraculous intervention of their patron saint, Spiridione, whose

The Patron Saint

mummified remains were brought from the Church of the Archangel Michael as soon as the ships had sailed, and carried in a thanksgiving procession round the town.

Spiridione was a shepherd of Cyprus who became first a monk and then a bishop. He was born as long ago as the third century after Christ, and was one of the members of the celebrated Council of Nicæa in the year 325. According to legend he attended the meetings of the council carrying a brick—(did the holy man intend to use the brick as an argument?)—and from this brick issued a magical stream of water and fire. From this time forward many miracles were attributed to him, so that after his death in the year 350 his relics were very highly prized. His body was exhumed, and after many vicissitudes reached Constantinople, whence it was brought to Corfu by a priest named Kalaichairetis and placed in the church of the Archangel Michael, where it still lies. This was in 1456. With Spiridione came the embalmed body of St. Theodora—also, apparently, the property of Kalaichairetis—which was placed in the cathedral. When Kalaichairetis died, he bequeathed Spiridione to his two eldest sons and Theodora to his youngest son. The latter, being a public-spirited individual, presented Theodora to the community.

Spiridione, however, was handed down from generation to generation, and is at the present day the property of a well-known Corfiote family, who derive from the relics, so it is said, an income varying from £1,000 to £2,000 a year, made up of offerings from devout believers. The head of

To the Land of the Eagle

the family is always a priest and has charge of the church in which the relics rest, and, as I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of a Greek lady who knew the family well, I was able to arrange through her to visit the church on a certain morning and to have the sarcophagus opened for my benefit. She accompanied me herself, and brought with her two friends, a young man and a young woman, who had begged to be allowed to join the party on what was evidently a very unusual occasion.



PRIEST OF THE
ORTHODOX CHURCH

The interior of the church was cool and pleasant after the yellow glare of the Corfu streets. From the painted roof hung magnificent lamps of hammered silverwork, and on the shining parquet floor stood two massive candelabra—offerings, like the lamps, from those who had benefited, or believed they had benefited, by the intercession of the saint. As is customary in the Greek Church, there were no pews or chairs other than seats round the wall, and the building gained greatly in dignity by their absence. Pictures, deep-toned and mellow with age, decorated the walls.

While we were waiting for the sacristan to announce our arrival to the priest, a constant stream of worshippers entered the church—men, women, and children. With every appearance of devotion, they made a pilgrimage from one sacred object to the other, kissing each in turn, and finally entering

Priestcraft

the little shrine which shelters the sarcophagus of Spiridione, to kneel there and pray. The evident genuineness of their faith was impressive, and I began to feel rather ashamed of the vulgar curiosity which was the chief reason for my presence.

The great moment arrived, and we in our turn went into the shrine. The sarcophagus, rich with embossed silverwork and jewels, shone in the light of the candles which surrounded it. It stood on a raised dais or step, and seemed to fill the whole space, so big was it and so small the shrine. We four stood in a row, with our backs to the entrance. There was room for us and for one other worshipper, and no more. The latter, a woman, knelt devoutly in the gloom beside us. One by one my companions crossed themselves and reverently kissed the sarcophagus. Then we waited in silence.

The priest and his acolyte came in by a side door. The priest, a tall and exceedingly good-looking man of grave mien and dignified aspect, took up his position at one end of the sarcophagus. The acolyte stood at the other. With slow and reverent movements, the priest unlocked the lid, raised it, and let down the side which faced us. He then opened a square panel in the upper surface of the coffin, and placed near it a saucer containing something that resembled dried leaves, possibly a disinfectant. Each gesture, each deliberate movement, conveyed the idea of intense devotion and intense reverence—and yet this man, this officiating priest, was actually the owner of the relics before him, and

To the Land of the Eagle

derived from them a very good income. I found it difficult to reconcile the two facts.

In a very beautiful voice he began to intone a service. Every phrase told, every inflection had meaning. There was no conventional and unctuous mouthing of words. The bent head, the flowing lines of the robe, the gentle movements in making the sign of the Cross, the beautiful voice rising and falling, all were in their way perfect—the art of the priest at its highest.

The voice stopped. The Greek lady whispered a question. “What is your name?”

“Edmonds”, I whispered back.

“No, no. Your first name.”

I gave it. The priest, informed in his turn, continued the service, and I realised for the first time that my curiosity concerning the relics had been interpreted as a desire to make some supplication to Spiridione, and that the service was being specially held on my account.

It ended. My companions stepped up one by one on to the platform, crossed themselves, stooped and kissed that part of the saint—the foot, I think—which was exposed by the open panel, touched the saucer containing the leaves, crossed themselves again, and with bent heads and every appearance of extreme piety resumed their places. I whispered to the Greek lady, “Must I do it too?” “It is just as you like”, was the reply. An effort seemed called for, and I made it. Stepping on to the platform, I stooped and put my head into the opening, saw a shapeless lump of

A Psychological Problem

something, enveloped in rusty bandages, straightened my back, touched the saucer as I had seen the others do, and



IN CORFU

feeling hot all over, regained my place. That was the only glimpse I had of the saint. The sarcophagus was reverently closed and re-locked, the priest, still enveloped in the odour

To the Land of the Eagle

of sanctity, moved slowly away to the vestry, and the acolyte took up a strategic position at the door with a plate in his hand. Very much in doubt as to the amount expected, I contributed a note, and the ceremony was at an end.

It was a curious experience, and made the more interesting by subsequent speculations about the psychology of the priest. How much of his devotion was genuine? How much, if any, was mere acting? Can a man make money out of sacred relics and yet revere them—not for their money-making value but for their holiness? Was the reverent tone of the voice assumed, was it the result of practice, or was it the manifestation of a deep-rooted faith? As I left the church and the carefully-maintained religious atmosphere began to wear off, these and many other questions crossed my mind. They still remained unanswered.

In Albania much of the scenery resembled England. The fields were often bordered by hedges, and familiar trees, such as oak, ash, willow and poplar, were common. In Corfu, however, I found no such resemblance. Olives, cypresses, and eucalyptus, are unknown in the English countryside, nor have we in England hedges of cactus and prickly pear, clumps of spiky aloe growing wild, orange trees, loquat trees, or the wild fig. All these, and many more, grow around Corfu.

The loquat is a curious fruit half-way between a plum and a pear. I encountered it for the first time in Valona. When really ripe it is very good to eat and quite harmless, but it is said to be unwise to eat it warm from the tree—an

Loquats

old woman's tale, I thought ; but I learned better. One day, when I was sketching near the village of Evriopoula, some few miles inland from Corfu town, a village girl who was passing pressed upon me a quantity of loquats. Her apron was full and she had evidently just gathered them. At first I declined the offer, but as she seemed hurt I eventually accepted a handful. She was a pretty creature, very healthy-looking, with bright, laughing eyes and wonderfully white teeth, and that may have been the reason that I felt obliged in common politeness to eat some of the fruit she had given me and show that I appreciated it. When I got back to the hotel I felt a little queer—a touch of sun, I thought. But the doctor who came to see me the next day, and, incidentally, charged me the very moderate fee of 2s., ascribed the trouble to the loquats, and ordered (though a Greek and not an Italian) that homely but efficacious remedy, castor oil.

Sunday, May 24th, found me still at Corfu, although I had originally intended to return long before then to Albania. I had a good light room where I could write and draw, I had



UMBRELLA PINE

To the Land of the Eagle

made some pleasant friends, the weather was perfect—like English summer weather at its best—and both the town and the surrounding country were full of delightful subjects for brush and pencil. Unfortunately I was too lazy to do very much sketching—a failing which I attribute to the climate. No really human person can work in Corfu—or wants to.

On this particular Sunday, seized by a remorseless zeal, I determined to shake off this all-pervading slothfulness and make an expedition on foot to Ay Deka, a village on the mountainside some 12 kilometres distant. With my sketching things and my lunch in a parcel I set out . . . in a carriage. A drive of about an hour brought me to the foot of the hill. The driver offered to wait all day and take me home again for an additional 50 drachmae. I was tempted, but remained firm: one way at least, I *would* walk. A Greek with a bundle of greenstuff under his arm took charge of me and conducted me by short cuts up the hillside to the village. He was an amiable person and politely insisted on carrying my various impedimenta, but limitations of language on both sides set a bar to conversation. “Engleesh verree good!” on his part, and a nod on mine, was about all it amounted to. Constant repetitions, however, made some amends for lack of variety, though by the time we reached a vantage point above the village, and sat down to rest, the remark was beginning to lose some of its original freshness and the nod some of its spontaneity.

The view here was fine. The irregular roofs of Ay Deka, with a blue church tower rising from their midst, lay

“ Engleesh verree good ! ”

immediately below us. Beyond stretched the panorama of Corfu :—olive-clad hills—fields—winding white roads—clumps of cypress—clusters of houses—villages, each with its church tower—Gastouri and the Achilleion—the lagoon—Corfu town itself with the citadel shining in the sunlight—the blue waters of the strait—the mountains of Epirus—the distant coastline of Greece and Albania. It was a most beautiful prospect.

The Greek, having patted me on the shoulder and uttered a final and fervent “ Engleesh verree good ”, now spoilt the whole effect by indicating that he wanted “ bakshish ”. With some annoyance I extracted a five-drachma note and gave it to him, and with that he departed to his dinner, leaving me alone. But not for long. Two boys spotted me from the village below and came up in hope of seeing me make what they call in those parts a “ photographie ”. I had hardly, with difficulty, contrived to shake them off when a youth approached, said “ good-morning ”, sat down beside me, and began the old game of “ Engleesh verree good ! ” I bore with him as patiently as possible until at last, seeing that there was no immediate prospect either of bakshish or of my beginning a sketch, he too, much to my relief, left me to solitude and meditation.

“ There is always a something ”, as an old Gloucestershire friend of mine used to say, by which he meant that nothing in this world is entirely perfect. I soon became aware of a “ something ” even out on this lovely hillside, and it was due to the unpleasant habit that people have

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hereabouts of using such places as substitutes for domestic sanitation. Authorities on the subject say that failing a thoroughly up-to-date drainage system it is best to have no drainage at all. It may be so. I did not stop to consider the question, but went.



CYPRESSES, CORFU

A well-worn pathway amongst the rocky boulders with which the ground was strewn led me to an old circular well, mossy and lined with ferns. It was evidently much used, and had been used recently, for spilt water lay about it in puddles. I took up a point of vantage on the bole of an old olive tree and was soon rewarded. Village girls came by in twos and threes, let down the bucket, filled their great jars and, balancing them on their heads, returned in single file

More Exercise

down the path, moving with grace and making light of their heavy burdens. This being Sunday they were dressed in the proper peasant costume, and the colour and movement foiled by the background of sombre olives made the picture a very delightful one. I waited until they had finished, and then, having lunched, set out on my tramp homewards.

What a splendid thing is exercise ! I strode off down the hill and at the bottom found a wineshop. By that time



PRICKLY PEAR

I began to feel a little weary, for, as every walker knows, it is much more tiring to walk down a hill than to walk up it. I therefore felt justified in taking a seat under the vine-covered trellis and calling for refreshment. While I drank the rough-tasting country wine and watched some swallows, which had nested in the rafters inside the building, fly in and out of the open door—wondering, too, what they did at night when the door was closed—a carriage drove up. From it two men descended, and, having paid their fares, entered the wine shop. The driver, from a roadside well

To the Land of the Eagle

worked by a long wooden arm or balance, proceeded to water his horses. For a while I watched him lazily ; then, pulling myself together for the long walk before me, I finished my drink, paid my score, and . . . climbed into the carriage.

And that is just what one does in Corfu.

Corfu is in truth a sleepy, lotos-eating island, whose people live on the easily-grown produce of the land in a sort of slothful content, too lazy to have much ambition beyond the ambition to live, too sensible, it may be, to strive after luxuries to which they are unaccustomed and which, in the long run, would add very little to their happiness. But for all that, they look back with regret to the time of the British administration when good roads were maintained all over the island, commerce was encouraged, and a prosperity was enjoyed that is now only a memory. A reinstatement of British control, supposing such a thing remotely possible, would be welcomed by everybody.



ISLAND OF SARANDA

CHAPTER VIII

The Fruit of the Lotos—The Coasting Schooner—Fellow Voyagers—
A Democratic Party—On the Way to Argyrocastron—At the Inn—
A Vegetarian Argument—An Unexpected Characteristic—Lorries
—Courtesies of Travel—The Ferry—To Stifle or Freeze—A Political
Grumbler—A Hairy Woman—Lonila Ziko—A Dissatisfied Miller—
A Vision of Luxury.



AN ARGYROCASTRIAN

I WAS quite happy in Corfu and in no hurry to leave. It was a delightful place to idle in. Even to a restless Englishman like myself, normally always conscious of an inner urge to be up and doing, to loaf all day seemed the natural thing. To stroll about the sunny streets, to laze on benches under the trees watching the tan-sailed fishing boats move slowly across the bay, to climb the citadel and sit for hours on the

rampart, to take a boat and be rowed to some sheltered cove and lunch and bathe there, to walk in the evening to Kanoni and drink ginger-beer in the harbour while the shadow of the western mountains spread slowly over the landscape, to wander homewards through the velvet dusk sweet with the scent of honeysuckle and lit by the glint of fireflies—such was my life in Corfu. I had tasted the fruit of the lotos.

To the Land of the Eagle

With an effort I made myself realise that idleness was not for me, and that I must continue my journey, and return in a few weeks' time, whether I wished it or not, to the hurrying, ever-restless life of civilisation. With great reluctance I packed my belongings and departed one morning to the wharf, having been told at the Pension that a ship was sailing for Brindisi and calling at Santi Quaranta. 9 a.m. was stated to be the time of departure. With no little fuss and bother I secured a shore-boat, had my suitcases put in, and got taken out to the steamer, only to find—to my great annoyance—that the information I had been given was inaccurate and that the boat went direct to Brindisi without a stop. Here was another of the petty troubles that beset the traveller. I did my best to accept it philosophically, but as I retraced my steps down the gangway and re-engaged the avaricious boatman who had but just rowed me out, I cursed my stupidity in not verifying the statement of the proprietor of the Pension.

On making further enquiries I was told that a small coasting schooner was crossing to Santi Quaranta during the day. I therefore had my things taken aboard her, and, having ascertained that the hour of sailing was eleven o'clock, went ashore to lay in a stock of provisions for the journey, and to while away the time of waiting. At half-past ten an excited individual came running after me and succeeded in making me understand that the schooner was just on the point of leaving. I ought to have known better than to believe him. Still, I had no desire to be left behind and

The Coasting Schooner

therefore, with a loaf of bread under my arm and my pockets full of hard-boiled eggs and oranges, I hurried on board again. There was no indication of departure. The ship's boy lounged against the bulwarks and spat at intervals into the dock, and an Albanian in a white fez sat stolidly on his kit evidently prepared to wait there if necessary until the Day of Judgment. As there seemed nothing else to do, I spread a coat on the deck and went to sleep.

About an hour later I was aroused by voices. A party of other passengers had just come aboard. They were followed at a considerable interval by the captain, and by a man in uniform who strolled about in a leisurely way and examined our passports. This looked hopeful. Some more time passed, and then the man in charge of the auxiliary engine disappeared below. The passport man, reluctantly abandoning a long and intimate conversation with the captain, went ashore. The ship's boy suddenly became galvanised into activity and sounded a long and piercing blast on the hand fog-horn. The engine began to rumble and a noisome smell reached me from the exhaust. The steersman took the wheel and the ship began to move. As we rounded the end of the jetty we fouled it, leaving behind a large piece of wood from the vessel's side. The dinghy was hurriedly lowered, the piece of wood was retrieved, and at last we were well on our way to Santi Quaranta. I could hardly believe it.

My fellow passengers, in addition to the Albanian, were ten in number. They included a Mohammedan woman, closely veiled, with her husband and child—the child a

To the Land of the Eagle

miserable undersized creature whose face and head were one mass of sores—and a young Greek girl who spent most



TAKING BREAD TO THE BAKEHOUSE

of the trip suckling a baby in full view of everybody, with her husband—a dirty fellow with several days' growth of beard—and a second child so much muffled up from the

Fellow Voyagers

imaginary cold that only eyes were visible. The remainder were nondescript men in shabby clothing, Greeks or Albanians, but which I cannot say.

We arrived during the afternoon. Ashore I found, in addition to the custom house and gendarmerie, a single long street of shops, cafés, and rickety wooden houses. A motor-lorry was loading up with planks, and on enquiry I found that it was going to Argyrocastron. As I knew that this was on the way to Koritza, whither I was now bound, I bargained with the driver and secured a front seat. About half an hour later we started. One fellow-passenger sat beside me, and several others sprawled as best they could on the planks behind.

We had hardly left the village when a voice from the back said, " Say . . . do you understand Amer'can ? "

The speaker was a tall, dark man, with a black moustache and clothes that were tidier than the normal. He had just arrived, he told me, from Philadelphia, where he owned a candy store, and was now on his way to Argyrocastron—his native town. With him on the lorry were his two sons—one sitting on the seat next to me—and a little daughter, a child of about eight with her hair done in two thin plaits of remarkable tightness. They had been down to Santi Quaranta to meet him and their excitement at the reunion vented itself in song—long dismal wailings much more suggestive of misery, I thought, than of joy or happiness. But they were friendly folk, and insisted, when we stopped at a village about an hour out, on treating me to coffee at the

To the Land of the Eagle

inn. We sat outside at a table under the vines like a family party, and were joined in true democratic fashion by the driver and the mechanic of the lorry. I thought with regret of the snobbish class-distinctions of my native land. How much happier we should be if only we could abolish them !

The Albanian countryside at this spot was but sparsely inhabited, and houses were few and far apart. The occasional villages were tumble-down and poverty-stricken. At one place the mosque had fallen into ruins—perhaps the result of an earthquake—and no one had troubled to build it up again. The Albanian, like the Turk, is something of a fatalist. He is also lazy. Doubtless it was the will of Allah that the mosque should collapse—why, then, trouble to rebuild it ? The broken minaret was crowned with an enormous stork's-nest on which stood the owner clapping its long beak. The stork, being a sacred bird, was in no danger, having once established itself, of being disturbed or turned out of its home.

Our way lay amongst mountains—soft green mountains with rounded outlines, very different in type from the jagged rocks of Montenegro. Their sides were splashed with the gold of broom and the yellow of sage, and with the purple of some wild-flower which grew in regular stripes in the crevices of out-cropping rock-strata. The air was scented and soft.

We travelled on for some hours without any incident beyond an occasional stoppage to tighten a bolt, to retrieve a loose nut, or to do some minor repairs to the engine. At length the plain of Argyrocastron came into view—a wide, well-cultivated valley many miles in extent, where green

On the Way to Argyrocastron

crops alternated with fields of ploughed earth as red as the soil of South Devon. It was the first considerable stretch of land I had so far seen which gave the impression of being well tilled and worked. We descended by a serpentine, and then, turning sharply to the northwards, followed a road which ran along the western side of the plain at the foot of



ALBANIANS AT ARGYROCASTRON

a range of slaty hills. Hay-making was in progress. Mowers—big, strapping fellows, white-fezzed and ragged—swung their scythes with a rhythmical motion, filling the air with the delicious scent of newly-cut grass. Elsewhere men were ploughing laboriously, in the manner which has survived from biblical times, with bullocks and wooden ploughs.

The opposite side of the valley—which appeared to be

To the Land of the Eagle

two or three miles in width—was bounded by a formidable chain of mountains still covered with snow in places unreached by the sun.

It was evening before we came in sight of Argyrocastron itself. Rounding a bend of the road we suddenly had a fine view of the town, which occupies three parallel ridges of hill at right angles to the main range, the highest of the three topped by an immense old Turkish fortress, black, rugged, and forbidding. On a fourth, and smaller, ridge is a monastery with cypresses. I have seldom seen a town so finely situated or so impressive at first sight.

The lorry climbed the winding road on low gear and drew up in an open space or square among cafés crowded with people. Work was over for the day and the Argyrocastrians were taking their ease. In a steep cobbled street beneath the fortress ramparts I found an inn. It was merely a pothouse and the accommodation was of the roughest. I secured a bedroom to myself, however—an unusual luxury in Albania, as I have already indicated. The ground floor, with a door opening on to the street, served as restaurant, bar, kitchen, larder, and general living-room. It was furnished with deal tables and benches. On the left of the door was a desk whereat the proprietor kept his accounts. On the right was an enclosed counter with a long metal tray containing lime, on which stood pots full of meat and vegetables slowly stewing. The tray was, in fact, a kind of fireless cooker. On a shelf below the tray were clean knives, forks and spoons, clean plates, and an enormous bowl of

A Vegetarian Argument

yaghourt. The publicity of the cooking arrangements, which is common to all Albanian eating-houses, has its advantages. It makes a menu unnecessary. The foreigner, just as easily as the native, can see for himself what food is available and can indicate the dish of his choice by pointing to it. In the inn at Argyrocastron, however, the publicity went unpleasantly far, for hanging from a rail of the staircase was to-morrow's dinner in the raw state—a defunct sheep all ready for roasting whole, with a long wooden spit struck through it lengthwise. This revolting sight brought me to the verge of vegetarianism, but since Albania, like Montenegro, is essentially a meat-eating country, I realised that it was not a suitable place to begin experiments in a vegetable diet, and I was therefore obliged to stifle my better instincts and carry on for the nonce in the old carnivorous way.

One feature of the Albanian inns that the traveller will remark is the absence of womenfolk. All the household work is done—and usually done very badly—by men or boys. At Argyrocastron the “chambermaid” was an Italian-speaking Albanian, dressed in a very old and shabby khaki uniform, who spared no pains to make me as comfortable as circumstances permitted, and was exceedingly grateful for the few liras I gave him on leaving. In fact, neither in Albania nor in Montenegro did I find that distressing greed for tips which is so characteristic of countries which claim to be much more civilised. Before I left Cettinje, being anxious to show my appreciation of services rendered by the

To the Land of the Eagle

consulate staff during my stay, I offered the maid—who had, incidentally, washed all my linen for me—a sum equivalent, I think, to about 2s. When at last, after some difficulty, I succeeded in making her accept it she seized and kissed my hand—to my intense embarrassment. And Vojn, who had carried my things for miles over the mountains and had given me ungrudging attention, behaved in exactly the same way and at first refused my modest offering. His manner did not, however, convey that he was too proud to accept the tip or that I had made a *faux pas* in offering it, but merely that what he had done he had done in goodwill and not with any idea of reward. It was refreshing, in these money-grubbing days, to meet with such an unexpected trait.

Before I left Argyrocastron I explored the old fortress. It proved to be a vast place full of arches, tunnels, and broken masses of masonry overrun with scarlet poppies. A few sleepy-looking, barrack-like buildings housed a few sleepy soldiers. The battlements gave a fine view of the town, the valley, and the mountains.

On making enquiries about getting to Koritza I found that a post lorry was leaving at midday. I therefore booked a front seat for which the price was 150 liras (Italian money being current in this part of Albania). I thought at the time that this was a rather heavy charge as Koritza was, as I then fondly imagined, only about three hours journey away. We should be there, I thought, in the classic English phrase, “in time for tea”. We were not. Nor were we there in time for tea on the day following. So I was slightly out in



OLD MOSQUE

Lorries

my calculations, and the fare, for a journey of nearly two days' duration, was after all by no means unreasonable.

The Albanian post lorries are of the familiar military type, and I came across no ambulance waggons like those in which I had suffered such discomfort in Montenegro. There is a good deal of traffic on these roads, not only by post lorries but by other lorries, which also belong to the State. A more or less regular service plies between Santi Quaranta and Koritza, the most important town in Northern Albania, with freight, passengers, and live-stock. I often noticed passengers sitting amongst sheep, lambs, and goats with every appearance of contentment. They did not seem at all incommoded. But in the post lorries, fortunately for me, livestock were not carried.

Tepeleni, our first stopping place, was destroyed by an earthquake some years ago and it has never yet been properly rebuilt. At the present time it consists of an irregular street of shanties made of lath and tarred paper. As soon as we arrived the lorry-conductor took me to a restaurant—a lop-sided wooden shack with an earthen floor—where two yokels sat eating maize-bread and yaghourt, and a third man, more opulent, was devouring fried fish with his fingers. Coffee was called for and, despite my protests, paid for by the conductor—little courtesies such as this being the commonplaces of travel in benighted and uncivilised Albania.

Beyond Tepeleni a river barred our way. There was a bridge, but it was in ruins like the rest of the village, and the crossing had to be made by a ferry. The roadway on

To the Land of the Eagle

the near bank was thick with men, dogs, donkeys, mules, oxen, and merchandise, all waiting to be taken to the other side. It was a long time before our turn came, and then,



PEASANT WOMAN

as the fully loaded lorry was too heavy for the ferry-boat, two journeys had to be made, one with the lorry itself and the other with goods and passengers. All this spelled delay, and as a consequence we did not arrive at Permeti, the town where we were to stay the night, until it was growing dusk.

The Permeti inn was primitive, but its roughnesses were mitigated by the willing efforts of the proprietor's small son, who did his best to make me comfortable and provided me with all the amenities the establishment could offer. He

was a bright, intelligent lad, and ought—to use a typically Western expression—“to get on”. He gave me a room to myself, a clean upper sheet, and a clean towel. I looked at the wooden ceiling with misgivings, for the weather was getting warm. It painfully suggested bugs. But it had

To Stifle or Freeze

recently been washed with paraffin, and a liberal quantity of the same malodorous fluid had been poured on the floor round the legs of the bed, so that but for the smell I suffered no inconvenience, nor did I need to use my tin of insect powder, though I kept it handy in case of emergency.

In all the local inns they provide, as bedcovering, a quilt stuffed with wool, and a sheet. The quilt may be all right for the winter, but it is too heavy for spring and summer. Consequently one has to choose between stifling under the quilt or freezing under the sheet. Washing apparatus you may or may not find. Generally it is a tiny trickle of water from the bottom of a kerosene tin hung on the wall outside. Should there be a mirror in the bedroom, the distorted reflection you see in it will dispel once and for all any claims you may have privately entertained to good looks. You can please yourself whether or not you use the brush and comb which, since the Albanian travels in what he stands up in, you will always find provided.

I dined that evening at an eating-house of the usual type in company of the driver and conductor of the lorry and several natives. One of these, who spoke English, told me that during the previous week gendarmes had visited the town and, after rounding up the Greek and Roman Catholic population, had searched their houses and confiscated all their firearms and other weapons. He further asserted that the Mohammedan families had not been interfered with nor had their arms been taken, and that in consequence, the Christians went in fear of a massacre. I made leave to doubt

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the man's veracity and set him down in my own mind as one of the confirmed political grumblers to be found in every country of the globe. That the gendarmes had been to the town and confiscated the weapons was probable, since the new law against the carrying of arms—a very necessary regulation in a country in which the blood feud and the vendetta still flourish—had to be enforced. It is possible, too, that without the knowledge of the authorities, individual gendarmes may have favoured certain of their co-religionists, for there is a good deal of religious intolerance in Albania even yet. The Albanian parliament, however, is not, as one might expect, divided into two antagonistic parties, Christian and Mohammedan, and I was assured by various informants that within the Chamber religious differences are dropped, and that the deputies, whether Mohammedan or Christian, have one united aim—the good of their country.

It is a far cry from politics to a hairy woman, but I hope the discursiveness of a book of travel makes the sudden change of subject permissible. Attracted by a crowd at the entrance to a booth in the main street of Permeti I approached, curious to know what might be going on. Folk were passing in and out, and I assumed that it was an entertainment of some kind. Here was an opportunity of seeing for myself the local substitute for picture-palace or music-hall. I paid a small coin and entered. Within was a large room empty save for a few wooden benches and a small stand or stage covered with drapery. Some gaping yokels sat on the benches staring at the stage in furtive silence. People

A Hairy Woman

dribbled in one by one until at length the room was moderately full. The curtain was then raised, and a young woman dressed in a scarlet and spangled shift was disclosed to view. A voluble showman, having harangued the audience and raised their curiosity to the topmost pitch, made a sign to the lady, who turned suddenly, lifted her spangled garment, and exposed a pair of fat legs and a back completely covered with a thick growth of woolly black hair—a repulsive sight at which I shuddered and fled. Side-shows in Albanian villages are better avoided.

Although 8.30 was the time given for our departure on the following morning, it was three hours later before the lorry was loaded up and ready to start. Eventually, however, we got away. It was a lovely morning of white, purple, and blue. Great cumulus clouds floated in the sky and threw slowly-moving shadows over the mountains. The air was clear after rain in the night. I was the only passenger, and, as I was no longer crowded, as I had been on the previous day by a fat man who took a good deal more than his fair share of the accommodation, could now stretch my legs and sit at my ease. The country was wild and rough. Only at wide intervals were there fields or signs of cultivation. For many miles we followed the course of a river, and at one point crossed it by a very graceful old Turkish bridge of one span, high in the middle, and barely wide enough to allow the lorry passage. I wished I could stop and sketch it. The wish had hardly crossed my mind when it was gratified. A tyre burst and had to be replaced. I not only sketched

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the bridge but a kilted shepherd lad called Lonila Ziko—a name as picturesque as the boy himself. I also had a talk with a young fellow in charge of a primitive flour-mill,



LONILA ZIKO

who spoke rudimentary Italian and asked me many questions. How long did it take to get from London to New York? How long from Albania to London? How much did it cost? What wages did people earn in London? And so forth.

I told him that wages were as much as 300 liras a week of five and a half working days, at which he shook his head enviously. "Here", said he, "they are 30 liras for a seven day week."

Fearing that I was giving him a false impression I hastened to explain that although wages were so good there were many people in England who could get no work at all. But I landed myself in a worse difficulty.

"What do they do?" he asked.

A Dissatisfied Miller

"They are paid by the Government."

"How much?"

"About 80 liras a week."

"Eighty liras a week for doing nothing?"

"Yes."

Unfortunately my Italian was not equal to an explanation of the true state of affairs, and it was, I fear, a sadly dissatisfied young man who returned to his work in the mill when, repairs having been effected, the lorry resumed its way.

We travelled on until three in the afternoon, when we reached a village called Leskovik, finely situated on a ridge of mountain, and overshadowed by a rocky peak of great height. Here the air was cold owing to the altitude, and I was glad of an overcoat. We stopped in the middle of the village by a big plane tree, and just outside a convenient restaurant where, being by now exceedingly hungry, I lunched, and, being thirsty, had a bottle of beer. It was the beer, doubtless, which brought my bill up to the rather surprising amount of 20 liras—beer being a luxury in the remoter districts. We had still a long way to go, and in half an hour's time were once more en route. I had a companion now, a young gendarme bound for Koritza, who spoke indifferent English and would insist on airing it. He told me that at Koritza I should find a splendid hotel, as good, he said, as any in Europe. As hour succeeded hour without sign of our near approach to our destination, I amused myself by picturing the luxuries of this Ritz of Albania, for I was tired and stiff, and the tourist side of my nature was uppermost.

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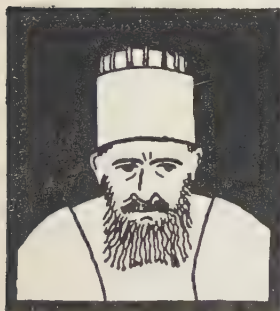
But alas for my pleasurable anticipations ! When, long after dark, we arrived at our journey's end I soon discovered that my hopes were vain. Only in name—Hotel Metropole—did the much-lauded inn approach even approximately the ideals of the West. Putting off the tourist and putting on the traveller, I went in and made the best of it.



FEZZES

CHAPTER IX

Coal at Koritza—An Economic Problem—A Night at the Metropole—The American School—I Go a-Missionising—In the Middle Ages—A Painful Incident—Converting the Imaum—The Dervish and Omar—"Blessed are the Weak-Minded!"—The Education Question—Women and the Moral Standard—Vengeance! A True Story—Silver and Gold—Italy Again—A Beautiful Lake—At Podgradetz—The Bull-Frogs.



DERVISH PRIEST

KORITZA is a town of some 20,000 inhabitants, with several fine new churches, an old Turkish mosque, and a prospect of electric light in the near future. It owes its importance to its situation in the centre of a large plain, one of the chief agricultural districts of Albania. The surrounding mountains contain coal, and during

the French occupation coal was exported in considerable quantities to Salonika. Since the war, however, there has been only a little surface mining—just enough to supply the local demand—and though the presence of coal may ultimately make Koritza an industrial centre there are as yet no signs of any such development. Albania is, in fact, in much the same position as Montenegro in regard to mineral exploitation and mining. Not only

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has it no railways, but the country is so mountainous and the population so small and so scattered that without a considerable subsidy from the State a railway could not be made to pay and is therefore a remote possibility. For this reason it seems likely that Albania will miss the blessings—or escape the degradation (whichever way you prefer to put it)—of industrialism, and remain an agricultural nation.

The town has a few smart-looking European shops, as well as one large semi-wholesale store, but for the rest it resembles other Albanian and Turkish towns with streets of cobblers, streets of blacksmiths, streets devoted to saddle-making, harness-making, rope-making, and so forth—all the various trades being segregated, and carried on in the conditions of confusion, dirt, and squalor which are a legacy from the middle ages. In addition there are many cafés, full from early morning to late at night with men who appear to have nothing better to do than sit there playing cards and backgammon. I commented on this fact and was told that it was a sign of bad times and the very serious economic situation of the moment. For this—as for the similar situation in Montenegro—the practical closure of the United States to immigrants is to a large extent responsible. In the past the States have supported a floating population of 40,000 Albanians to whom their own country offered no prospect of remunerative employment ; to-day most of these men are at home with nothing to do.

I was often asked about Australia, and whether some scheme might not be arranged by which entry would be

An Economic Problem

permitted to Albanians. To this I could only reply that we have economic problems of our own within the Empire which are equally urgent and pressing, and that I did not think it likely that the Australian Government would welcome or allow any influx of foreigners in search of work as long as there are so many people workless both in Great Britain and in Australia itself.

The solution of the difficulty might be found in getting these men back to the land in their own country. But men who have been in America and become accustomed to civilisation do not willingly return to the rough conditions of Albanian peasant life, though if they would only do so it is probable that their lives would be all the healthier and all the happier. The peasant at least possesses the three essentials—house, food, clothing—and if he has no money, he has, on the other hand, very little need of it. He has in addition the inestimable advantage over the town dweller of a free, out-of-door existence, and notwithstanding his poverty is to be envied rather than pitied. The modern Albanian, like the vast majority of people elsewhere, thinks that money is everything. He forgets, as most of us forget, that money is, strictly speaking, merely a convenient substitute for barter, and that the present-day idea of money as an object in itself is fundamentally unsound.

There is little doubt that the amount of land under cultivation in Albania could be increased, and that, apart from area, the yield, if modern scientific methods were adopted, could be increased also. In some parts of the

To the Land of the Eagle

country, if I am rightly informed, two crops a year are possible, though whether the land would stand two crops without impoverishment I have not enough knowledge of such matters to say. There is room, too, for many more sheep and cattle than at present. If the gipsies can raise the large flocks they do, presumably the Albanian can raise them also. I saw gipsy encampments with flocks which appeared to run to a thousand head of sheep or more. As to cattle, the local breed is small; this is attributed by the natives to the poor pasturage, but the importation of pedigree stock might bring about an improvement. In fact, as I see it, there is wealth in Albania—the best kind of wealth, that which comes from honest work on the soil—and I cannot help wondering whether the Albanian who is yearning after the United States, Canada, or Australia, as the case may be, is not shutting his eyes to opportunities which lie ready to his hand in his own country. It is a truism that people are often blind to their own immediate surroundings.

The accommodation offered by the Hotel Metropole fell so far short of my fanciful anticipations that as soon as I had supped I made my way through the ill-lit streets to the American School, hoping that my friends Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy—whom I had met at Tirana—might be able to tell me of better quarters. They assured me, however, that the Hotel Metropole was the only place at which it was at all possible to stay, and very kindly offered to make me up a bed in their sitting-room. This offer—foolishly, as it turned out—I declined. I was back early the next morning begging that



COUNTRY WOMEN AT KORITZA

I Go a-Missionising

it might be renewed. I had a most uncomfortable night in a bedroom with three beds, of which two were occupied by Albanians who slept in their clothes and snored. The third bed I shared with a host of predatory creatures who seemed to have been fasting for months in anticipation of my arrival. At five the next morning, when I had sunk from sheer exhaustion into a fitful slumber, I was aroused by the other two men getting up, and saw my late antagonists, bloated and swollen with their feast, slowly climbing the wall. Even at eight there were still a few stragglers toiling painfully homewards—the rearguard of the victorious army.

The Missionary School is a private philanthropic concern, not as yet under the U.S. Missionary Board. It has been kept going, in the face of many difficulties, practically continuously since 1908. The Greeks, who were at that time in power, knowing that their treatment of the Albanian people was not likely to increase their prestige in either Great Britain or America, had no desire that an American should be a witness of it, and threw every possible obstacle in the way of the establishment of the school. It speaks highly for Mr. Kennedy's persistence that in spite of this he succeeded in his endeavour. The school is strictly non-sectarian and at the present time is attended by a large number of scholars, both Christian and Mohammedan.

On the afternoon of the Sunday which I spent at Koritza we went out a-missionising. A conveyance of the buggy type took us to a village in the plain which offered I suppose, a promising field. The journey was not speedy,

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as the horse firmly refused to go at any greater pace than a walk. He evidently thought the load—five adults, a boy, and a harmonium—more than any self-respecting animal could be expected to tolerate—and I am bound to confess that I agreed with him. Our destination having eventually been reached, we drew up on a grassy space near an old mosque. On one side was a stream shaded by poplars, on the other were a few cottages half hidden in greenery. They were heavily tiled. The broken mud walls disclosed inner brickwork and timbered cross-beams. Not a door but was ajar—the women were secretly watching us. By the stream a group of villagers in white fezzes were squaring logs. Some nearly black gipsy children were playing with a kitten. A small boy was proudly exhibiting a pair of new shoes with enormous bosses. A flock of geese waddled across the green. And on the other side of the hedge a man was ploughing with a wooden plough and a pair of bullocks. Such was the picturesque setting of our missionary endeavour. Indeed, so remote was the spot that one felt that the clock had gone back several centuries. The twentieth century was merely a dream—a figment of the imagination. We were in the middle ages again. . . . But suddenly, from the distance there came a curious humming sound. It grew louder and louder. The men ceased work and looked up. We looked up also. And with a roar the passenger plane that plies between Koritza and Tirana swept overhead, diminished to a speck, and disappeared in the sky beyond the mountains to the southwards.

A Painful Incident

The horse was now unhitched from the buggy, a sheet on which were printed the words of a hymn in Albanian was hung upon it (on the buggy, I mean), and the harmonium was lifted down. The horse, conscious of duty done, began to nibble contentedly. Mr. Kennedy, conscious of duty to do, walked towards the group of men at the streamside. They stopped work and exchanged salutations with him. Then one of their number—a rough-looking fellow in ragged homespun clothes—began a harangue in American-English.

“This goddamned country no good”, he exclaimed. “No goddamned good! Hell, no! No goddamned good! No money! No factories! No nothing! No goddamned good! This goddamned—”

But here the missionary interposed. “My friend”, said he gently, “Do not take God’s name in vain! Some day you may need His help.”

The Albanian, momentarily taken aback but quite uncomprehending, waited a moment and then began again. “This goddamned country no goddamned good! No work! No money! No nothing! No goddamned—”

Again the missionary interrupted but this time in Albanian. The man listened with a show of politeness then turned to me.

“Say!” he cried, “Do you speak English?”

I nodded.

“This goddamned country no goddamned good! No goddamned good! No money! No—”

But at this point the harmonium came into action and

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further blasphemies were drowned by the strains of " Fight the Good Fight " fortissimo con fuoco.

The imaum of the mosque, a fine figure in the dignified



THE IMAUM

white turban that is a mark of the priesthood, now came up, and with him a man who proved to be the brother of the village head-man. Permission was thereupon asked to hold

Converting the Imaum

a "meeting". But at this there was some hesitation, since the head-man himself was away and in his absence no one cared to accept the responsibility of granting such permission. Failing the meeting, we now asked to be allowed to see the village school and were at once taken to a little room adjoining the mosque, wherein sat a dozen boys in fezzes of every conceivable shape and pattern receiving instruction from a young Albanian school-teacher. The lesson was suspended and we were given seats, the boys staring at us meanwhile with interest and curiosity.

After some general conversation—which, of course, I was unable to follow, as it was in Albanian—the missionary produced a bundle of leaflets and having distributed them began what was, I imagine, a little sermon or homily. To this the imaum, the teacher, and the scholars listened attentively, the imaum nodding his head at every remark with which he found himself in agreement. The boys then sang to us—a horrible noise—and Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy replied with a duet from the hymn-book. This ended the proceedings.

I admired the missionary's tactful determination, but I admired the tolerance of the imaum still more. What English parson would permit a Mohammedan priest to interrupt the village school with a sermon and a distribution of Mohammedan tracts?

Later that day I had another object-lesson of the same kind. We visited a monastery belonging to the Dervish sect of the Mohammedans, an influential body who owned

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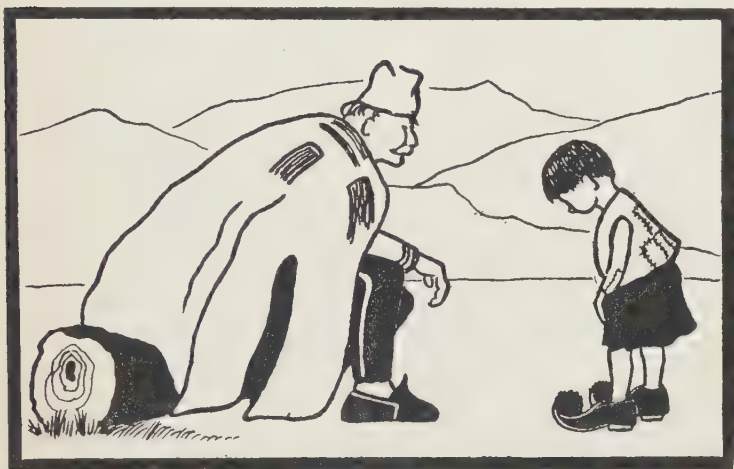
most of the surrounding land. The head of the fraternity received us in an upper room furnished in Turkish fashion with carpets, divans, and cushions. He was a big man with a great brown beard, a prominent nose, and a huge white hat, and he sat cross-legged in the Oriental way. After he had entertained us with coffee, cigarettes, and conversation, the harmonium was carried upstairs and deposited in the middle of the room—an astonishing anachronism in that atmosphere of Omar Khayyam—and hymns were sung to him for the good of his soul. Leaflets were left, as if by accident, on the divan, as well as a hymn-book—all printed in Albanian—and so a little more of “the Lord’s work” was accomplished. But I wished I could see into the dervish’s mind and read what he really thought of it all. And I wondered what would happen if he were to turn the tables and attempt a little missionary work on his own account. The situation would have been unusual, and might have proved amusing.

The translation of the Bible into a somewhat limited language like Albanian has its pitfalls. In one of Mr. Kennedy’s tracts the quotation “Blessed are the poor in spirit” occurred. This, unfortunately, had been rendered by the Albanian translator, and, more unluckily still, had been printed by the printer, as “Blessed are the weak-minded”!

The dervish, in answer to a question I put to him through Mr. Kennedy, said that there was no Albanian literature, and that such poetry and legend as there was had survived only through being handed down orally. This, he explained,

The Education Question

was due to the fact that Albania had for such a great part of its existence been a subject race. Under Turkish domination the Turkish language was made compulsory and was taught in the schools, and Albanian books were confiscated. The Turks were followed by the Greeks, who were even more bitter against the printing of Albanian and subjected every



THE NEW SHOES

house to a rigorous search and burned every Albanian book that had escaped the Turks. Asking about education, I was told that it is only very lately that the country has had a chance of settling down and attending to this very important matter. During the war it was occupied at different times by the Austrians, the Italians, and the French, and education, like everything else, was in a state of chaos. Now, however,

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there is an improvement, and in the principal towns there are not only schools for boys but schools for girls also. The villagers, however, with the aversion from change and progress which is characteristic of the peasant in all countries, oppose the education of the girls. What do they want with education? Is it not their job to attend to the house, to work in the fields, to wait on their lords and masters and to bear them children? So say these village folk,—and I seem to have heard arguments on the education question, in essentials exactly the same though perhaps not quite so crudely put, uttered by persons in a certain civilised country who ought to know better.

During my stay in Koritza I explored the town thoroughly. The Mohammedan quarter swarms with children—quaint little creatures in all sorts of garments, the girls for the most part wearing the orthodox Turkish trousers. They seem happy enough, though dirty. The Christian section of the town does not lag behind the Mohammedan in this particular, and there are no signs whatever of a decreasing birth-rate. As you walk along the rather narrow streets, open and half-open doorways give glimpses of shady courtyards where women sit spinning and sewing and nursing their babies. There are plants in tubs, and trellises, and vines, and always a pump to supply the household with water, for Koritza is proud of its water, which is very pure and fresh. In the business parts crowds of men fill the streets, and they carry all sorts of things—fish on a string, the entrails of sheep, dead mutton, live kids, the raw pelts of goats and cattle,



THE STRONGER SEX



Women and the Moral Standard

sheep's heads, and every conceivable kind of foodstuff both animate and inanimate. Here the only women to be seen are peasants with loads of grass and fodder, or gipsies with bags slung across their shoulders and distaffs in their hands, for it is not considered respectable for women to walk in the main streets of the town, though in the more secluded parts you may occasionally meet high-heeled Mohammedan ladies whose veils do not quite hide the fact that they are smartly dressed in the European fashion.

One rarely sees men and women together in Albania, and in consequence one gets the impression, rightly or wrongly, that the company of women is not valued, and that women are regarded only as household drudges and the mothers of children. Nevertheless—or perhaps on this account—the standard of morality is high both in Albania and throughout the Balkans, and breaches of the moral code are rare. In all uncivilised and half-civilised communities the same characteristic is observable, for a wife is regarded as property just as much as a sheep or a bullock or a house, and it is the primitive man's first instinct to keep his property inviolate. Doubtless the women as well as the men have come to regard this point of view as normal, and it is to this, together with a healthy fear of the consequences which any lapse must inevitably bring, that the chastity of the Balkan women is chiefly to be attributed, though a simple religious faith accepted without questioning may also play some part. At all events, whatever the reason, the fact remains that the standard of conduct is, in this particular, higher in the

To the Land of the Eagle

Balkans than in more civilised and cultured parts of Europe, and the following true story attests to the lengths to which men are prepared to go in order to maintain the code.

A young peasant of Epirus who had only recently taken a wife had to go to the war. On leaving he placed her in the care of his brother, charging him by everything he held sacred to guard her honour as if it were his own. On his return, a few years later, he found that the trust had been betrayed—and by the brother himself—and that his wife was about to become a mother. The primitive peasant code demanded the death of both the guilty parties, and the soldier killed his wife with his own hand, but before he could go in pursuit of his brother, who had fled to the mountains, was arrested by the gendarmerie. At the subsequent trial he was sentenced to fifteen year's imprisonment—a sentence which is still unexpired. The man who told me the story said that he paid a visit to the gaol and had an interview with the prisoner, who at first stated that there had been a reconciliation between his brother and himself. The visitor, who knew that this could not possibly be true, said, "Why do you lie to me?" And, as the man remained silent, continued, "I know that you will go back when you are free and kill your brother. And what will be the use of that? It will only mean another long term of imprisonment."

The prisoner nodded. "Yes", he said. "But when my imprisonment is over I shall once more be able to live honourably amongst my own people."

Until, therefore, the disgrace has been wiped out by the

Silver and Gold

blood of his brother this man cannot take his rightful position in the family or in the community to which he belongs, and rather than be an outcast and scorned by his people he is prepared to spend a great part of his life in gaol. Such is the Balkan code of honour.

At Koritza I found that the money in circulation was no longer Italian. Here, as at Tirana, one transacted business with the krone (or crown) instead of with the lira, as at Durazzo, Valona, Argyrocastron and in the South generally. The currency, moreover, was entirely metal, and consisted, in addition to the Austrian krone itself, of Turkish silver coins, Greek silver drachmae, Serbian dinars, and so forth—the basis being gold. There are no banks, but there are money-changers who are always quite willing to cash British or American notes, and who have drawers full to the brim with gold—French napoleons, English sovereigns and half-sovereigns, and American five-dollar pieces. I had not seen so much gold at one time since the old days before the war when bank cashiers in English used to gather it up from the counter by the shovelful.

The absence of banks must, one would imagine, be a considerable hindrance to the commercial development of a country. Nevertheless it is remarkable how little difference it seems to make in Albania, and I began to wonder whether banks are, after all, as essential as we are prone to think. It was likely, however, at the time of which I am writing, that an Albanian bank would shortly be established with headquarters at Tirana. A proposal had been made by the

To the Land of the Eagle

Italian Government to finance such a bank with a loan, and the question of the acceptance or refusal of this offer was then being discussed by the Chamber. The offer was hedged in by conditions of which one I understood, was a requirement that in case of any default in repayment the Italian Government should be entitled to seize the Albanian customs. But it was difficult to get information upon the accuracy of which one could depend. In the end the Chamber did, I believe, accept the Italian offer, so that Albania now, presumably, has a bank, and Italy another large finger in the Albanian pie.

As I had been saved from the necessity of sleeping at the Hotel Metropole—thanks to the kind hospitality of my American friends—I was able to stay for some days in Koritza before moving on to the Lake of Ochrida. I wanted, if possible, to cross the lake by steamer and visit the town of Ochrida and its celebrated monastery, and I was told that a steamer service ran there from Podgradetz, a lakeside village distant an hour and a half from Koritza by post lorry. So I booked a seat and departed.

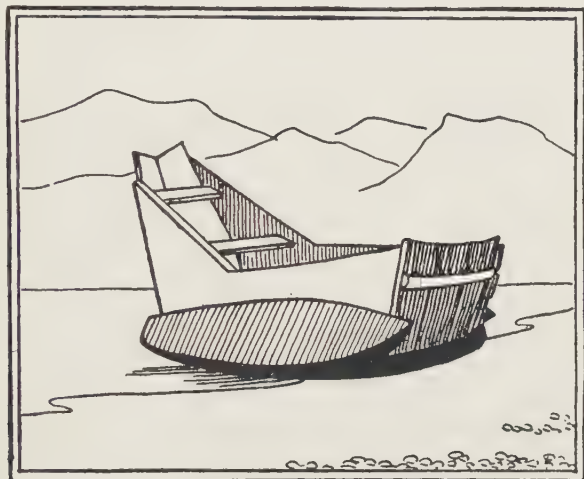
On the afternoon of my arrival the lake was looking extremely beautiful—sky, water, and mountains mingling in a haze of turquoise and opal. But I found that it was always changing. The next day there were thunderstorms about and the surface of the lake was vivid green against a background of violet mountains half hidden in inky clouds. On the day after that the water was a deep blue, and the mountains were veiled in a soft grey mist. And so on, through infinite variations.



STREET IN PODGRADETZ

At Podgradetz

Podgradetz is a pretty little town situated at the water's edge. Fishing is its main industry, the boats used being of a curious and cumbersome build unlike any craft I have seen elsewhere. It is also the distributing centre for local produce, and on market days is a lively little place, packed to the limit with peasants, donkeys, horses, mules, sheep,



A PODGRADETZ FISHING-BOAT

cattle, goats, sellers of this, buyers of that, sacks of wheat, maize, rye, rolls of home-made cloth, eggs, chickens, dairy produce, and all the various commodities necessary for the life of the district. On days other than market days it is, however, quiet enough, and there are few people about save some café loungers, half-a-dozen idle gendarmes, a few

To the Land of the Eagle

shop-keepers, and children. The children have an ideal existence—from the child's point of view. Down the centre of every street runs a little trickling stream of water in which they can play and mess about to their hearts' content, and there are no nurses to reprove them for making themselves wet or scold them for dirtying their clothes.

In Podgradetz, as elsewhere in Albania, the children are often quite pretty. Their good looks, however, seldom last to maturity—at least the good looks of the girls, who deteriorate so rapidly in appearance after about the age of sixteen that they seem to skip a whole period and become old women immediately.

While I was in Podgradetz I made the acquaintance of the schoolmaster and the doctor. The schoolmaster invited me into the school where he was giving the third and fourth classes—girls—an arithmetic lesson. Without any trace of shyness the children came out from the class one by one and did sums on the blackboard. They seemed bright and intelligent, and I was not surprised when the teacher told me that he had found the girls more intelligent and quicker than the boys.

The doctor, who also ran the chemist's shop, as is customary in these parts, was a cheery little man bursting with local patriotism. To use an Americanism, "he boasted his home town some". He praised the water, the air, the scenery. He took me up a hill in rear of the town and showed me the view. "Is there anywhere in the world a finer prospect than this?" he demanded. The local wine,

The Bull-Frogs

he assured me, was as good as the best vintage champagne. And as for the climate—consumptives in the last stages of the disease began to put on weight on the third day after their arrival, and what greater proof of its value could one have? The inhabitants, although poor, were strong and healthy, and had many children (I did not need the doctor to tell me this, for children swarmed there), and altogether Podgradetz was a paradise but for one thing—the lack of money. For the moment the worthy man overlooked the fact that this made the analogy all the closer.

These panegyrics were delivered in French, a language which is spoken by all persons who have been students at the Continental universities and hospitals. The Podgradetz schoolmaster spoke it also. One sometimes hears the opinion expressed that English will eventually become the universal extra language. It is much more likely to be French than English.

I remained in Podgradetz for several days, waiting for the boat and amusing myself as best I could by writing and sketching and going for walks in the surrounding hills. One day, as I was strolling by the shore of the lake close to the town, a curious quacking noise arrested my attention. It sounded like an angry goose, or a duck of exceptionally powerful vocal attainments. But there was no duck or goose in the vicinity and I could not imagine what caused it until I noticed that the sound coincided with the appearance of certain black dots on the surface of the water. Then I discovered that the authors of the noise were frogs which had

To the Land of the Eagle

been provided by Nature with a remarkable sound-producing apparatus. This consisted of two bulbs, like miniature balloons, which suddenly appeared, one on each side of the creature's head, and as suddenly vanished on the utterance of the raucous and penetrating cry which it had so greatly puzzled me to account for.

CHAPTER X

The Daily Question—I Interview the Prefect—An Unfair Deal—Start of the Pack-train—The Albanian Pack-horse—Through the Mountains—A Rough Shelter—Dawn—Salutations—Chokus—A Mid-day Meal—Fording a River—"Ca' Canny"—Elbasan at Last—Good-night.



NEW SHOES

"TO-MORROW—TO-MORROW—TO-MORROW!" Always "to-morrow!"

I was tired of asking my daily question, tired of the inevitable smiling answer, tired of the continual disappointment. I seemed to be stuck indefinitely at Podgradetz, and time was passing. If Ochrida was impossible, could I get direct to Elbasan? I determined to find out, and, since it was obviously useless to continue to question folk whose anxiety to please

was greater than their regard for the truth, I bethought myself of the prefect and called at the prefecture—which, of course, I ought to have done in the first instance. The prefect, who spoke French, received me amicably and expressed his willingness to do all in his power to assist me. But when I mentioned Ochrida and the Ochrida steamer, the shrug of his shoulders and the gesture he made with his hands told me enough. It was abundantly clear that Ochrida must be ruled out of my itinerary.

To the Land of the Eagle

“ Est-il possible, alors ”, I demanded, “ d’aller d’ici à Elbasan direct ? ”

“ Oui. A cheval. Deux jours.”

“ Et pouvez-vous me trouver des chevaux et un guide ? ”

“ Mais certainement. Un gendarme aussi. Quand voulez-vous partir ? ”

“ Demain matin.”

“ A quelle heure ? ”

“ A huit heures.”

“ Bien.”

So the matter was settled, and the prefect of Podgradetz proved himself at one and the same time a business-like official untrammelled by red-tape (he did not even ask to see my passport) and a very useful friend to a traveller in a difficulty. He made good his promise, though, owing to the horses having to come from Koritza, we were not able to make as early a start as I should have liked, and it was, in fact, some time after midday before the driver—a taciturn fellow whom no arguments could shake—consented to move. When at length all was ready I scrambled as best I could into my seat—my beast being loaded up with packs—and our little cavalcade departed on the first stage of the journey to Elbasan.

I had contracted for two horses—one for myself and one for my baggage—at the price of a napoleon and a half (24s.). Had I known the capabilities of the Albanian pack-horse, I should have been content with one. I soon discovered that I had been swindled, for the animal on which I rode carried

Start of the Pack-train

in addition to myself two enormous packs, one on each side ; while my suit-cases were slung on another beast already burdened with a huge packing-case, several odd bundles, and a rider as well. Either the driver got paid twice over or this fellow had a free ride. I felt that I had not received a fair deal, nor had the horses, but I knew that it would not be an atom of use to remonstrate, for the driver, even if I could have talked his language, was quite incapable of grasping my point of view. So I had to put up with things as they were.

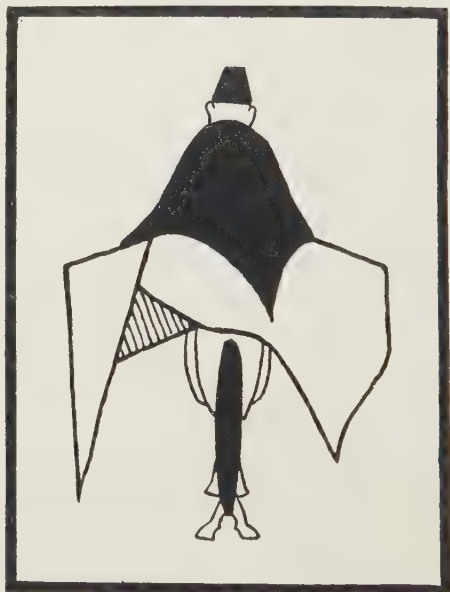
Our party, in addition to myself, consisted of the driver and the gendarme on foot, an American-speaking Albanian and his cousin, both mounted, and two heavily-laden pack-horses without riders. Later on in the journey we were joined by other travellers anxious to take advantage of our company, or of the protection afforded by the gendarme, and long before Elbasan was reached we were quite an imposing procession.

The sight of a train of pack animals moving slowly along a path in single file always stirs me. I do not know why, unless, perhaps, it awakens some deeply-buried ancestral memory dating back to the days when in England, also, such sights were the commonplaces of every day. I had always wanted to travel in this way, and now my wish was gratified. Perched up on top of the enormous pack-saddle I enjoyed this novel mode of locomotion, the sunshine, the pleasant breeze, the blue of the lake, and the purple of the cloud-shadows on the sunny mountains opposite. It was a lovely

To the Land of the Eagle

day and the conditions for travel could not have been bettered. I felt perfectly happy and contented. Poor innocent ! I little realised what was before me.

The horses had neither bridles nor bits, nor even head-ropes, a headstall decorated with blue beads being the only



A PACK PONY

harness. But as it soon became apparent that they knew every inch of the way, the uncomfortable feeling engendered by the absence of head-rope or guiding rein wore off, and we resigned ourselves to being carried along like so many bundles of merchandise. The lead horse went ahead unhesitatingly ;

The Albanian Pack-horse

not a word was said or a touch given to guide him during the whole difficult journey from Podgradetz to Elbasan. Indeed, the intelligence of these pack animals was a revelation to me. I could actually see my beast think. If there were a choice of ways over a bad bit of ground he would hesitate momentarily and then take the one he considered the best. If he had to pass a post or a tree, after a similar slowing-up he would move outwards a few inches to allow the pack to clear the obstacle, then, with a little shake of the head which said as plainly as words could, "That's all right!" he would resume his normal way. His intelligence, however, did not, I must admit, extend to the vertical, and he would pass under tree branches without any regard to the rider on his back. The edge of a precipice, when we got up into the mountains, was an irresistible temptation to him, perhaps because the edge offered a bit of smooth and unbroken ground, and I suffered many agonising moments on account of this idiosyncrasy. It is alarming, when you are unused to it, to find yourself looking down into space from the back of an animal over which you have no manner of control. I vividly remember, as we were at a particularly awkward corner where the path sloped downwards and outwards, the pack animal in front of me slipping and only with difficulty recovering himself. I held my breath as my beast passed the danger point. And I recall some hair-raising seconds when my horse was taken with a fit of coughing on the extreme edge of what appeared to be a bottomless abyss. But, to be quite fair to the creature, he always went slowly

To the Land of the Eagle

and carefully at such moments, as if saying to himself, " This is a bit tricky—steady does it ! " and giving his head, when the crisis was past, a little shake which said quite plainly, " We're well over that, thank goodness ! "

In addition to this trick of choosing the precipice edge he had another peculiarity—a habit of walking with his head between his forelegs. Perhaps he was shortsighted. I cannot say. But at times I seemed to be moving mysteriously through the air as I used to do in childish dreams at just a sufficient height above the ground to evade an irate nurse, a bear, and a policeman.

A more likeable trait was his affection for the lead horse, his stable companion. As long as he could follow immediately behind the leader he was perfectly happy and contented, but if by any chance he lost his position he fidgeted until he could get back there. And if, as occasionally happened, in a fit of abstraction he somehow got in front, as soon as he realised the situation he would stop dead and wait until the lead horse had caught him up again and passed him ; then he would nuzzle his friend's quarter, as much as to say, " Here I am, old thing ! ", and fall happily into line behind, with his nose close pressed to the lead horse's tail.

For several hours, moving always at a deliberate walking pace, we followed the road by the lake edge, and before long it began to dawn upon me that travelling by pack-train was not going to prove as pleasurable as I had anticipated. My legs became cramped from lack of stirrups



PACK-TRAIN DRIVERS

Through the Mountains

or support, and the wooden pack-saddle caught me in the back. Behind us Podgradetz was still visible, while Ochrida, the unattainable, on the other side of the lake appeared as far off as ever. I realised with some dismay that it was going to prove an interminably slow and tiring journey. However, there was nothing for it but to push on, so I wriggled about until I found a new and more comfortable position and resigned myself to the inevitable.

At length, just below a hamlet on the hillside, the first horse took a sharp turn to the left and led the way along a stream-bed full of boulders. There did not seem to be any road, and for the moment I thought he had made a mistake. But he knew quite well what he was about. My horse followed him, the pack-saddle rocking like a ship in a storm. The track steepened. Up and up we went by narrow and stony ways until we had left the lake far below us. No obstacle seemed to daunt our sturdy little mounts. They made light of their enormous loads and forced their way onwards and upwards while their riders clung as best they could to the swaying saddles. I felt that I ought to get down and walk, but I noticed that nobody else did, and discovered later that it is not customary to dismount except when descending a hill.

We had now left the lake far behind and were passing through high-lying hill country covered with oak scrub. In the leafage nightingales were singing. The partial shade was pleasant and the air was fresh and cool. Up hill and down, sometimes riding sometimes walking, we pushed on

To the Land of the Eagle

with never an easy. We had a long distance yet to go. A wide valley came into view, bounded by ranges of purple mountains. Dismounting, we took a short cut down the hillside while the horses went round by the track. At the foot of the hill was a police post. Here the gendarme handed over the paper which was in effect my way-bill, and another gendarme was appointed to accompany us on the next stage in his place. Some men in a gloomy hut at the wayside provided us with coffee and sold the driver fodder for the horses. We were not allowed to linger—and how I longed for a little rest!—but after five minutes were en route again. As the sun was getting low we crossed a plain with many cattle feeding in the long grass and peasants at work. The women wore the coarse white homespun of the district. Farmhouses dotted the hillside at intervals. At the end of the plain was a village—peaceful, remote, and mediæval. It was a shock to come suddenly across a couple of heavy guns abandoned by the roadside—relics of the war and a memento of our glorious civilisation.

The sun set. But we pushed steadily on in the gathering gloom. I had an idea that the driver was making for a village at which we should be able to get accommodation for the night, but if he ever had such an intention he had to give it up. When it was too dark to go much farther we reached a herd's hut where a rude shelter, erected for the benefit of passing travellers who might find themselves benighted, offered a primitive hospitality. This, the driver indicated, was our halting place. Cramped, and stiff, and

A Rough Shelter

tired, we dismounted. The horses were unloaded—though, on account of the cold, not unsaddled—and turned out into the field. In the shelter, which consisted of a few posts with a roofing of oak scrub and was open to all the winds that blew, we set about making ourselves as comfortable as we could. The shepherd brought us coffee and some rush mats to lie upon, and on some hard-boiled eggs and a loaf that I had providentially brought with me I supped. The American-speaking traveller and his cousin shared bread and cheese and raw onions. The driver produced from his pocket a horrible and revolting tit-bit in the shape of a sheep's head, and proceeded to devour it in primitive fashion with his fingers. The gendarme, having, with the lack of foresight that is characteristic of the local police force, been despatched on this journey without any rations whatsoever, finished the remains of my loaf. Then we all lay down as we were and slept, and the last things I remember were a cat walking over me, and a puppy making a determined effort to share my bed.

I was aroused in the morning by the cold. It was four o'clock and twilight. My neighbour got up and went out, and a few minutes later I heard the welcome crackle of a fire. Soon all of us, including a party of travellers who had joined us during the night, were sitting and warming ourselves at the blaze and waiting for the coffee and milk which the shepherd was preparing for us in his hut close by. A cuckoo was calling and somewhere far away a cock was crowing. Dawn was near. The horses came down from the

To the Land of the Eagle

field for their breakfast of maize, and soon afterwards the work of placing the packs in position was begun. At 5.30 we bade the shepherd farewell, and, leaving the driver to bring the horses along after us, set out on foot down the trail.

When in Montenegro I had been struck by the friendly attitude of the peasants we met. There they were always ready with a smile and a cheery "Dobar dan!" But it was quite otherwise in Albania, where no salutations were given or expected and the peasants regarded us with a suspicious stare. I several times attempted a greeting, but it never elicited any response. Greetings between relations, however, are warm enough if they are all like one I witnessed on the morning about which I am writing. A young Yankee-speaking Albanian had attached himself to our party and was waiting with us at the bottom of a hill for the rest of the pack-train to come up when he saw an old man driving two mules along the trail towards him. "That my pop", he said. And he ran forward and not only shook the old man warmly by the hand but kissed him on both cheeks with every sign of affection.

An hour's trek brought us to a place which I understood was called "Chokus". The name as spelt on the board over the police post began with a Q and ended with a T, and how it came to be pronounced "Chokus" I cannot imagine. Here the gendarme handed in my way-bill and was replaced by a substitute, an oldish man for whom I was sorry later on. He started out literally at a moment's notice to trudge on foot the whole day's journey to Elbasan, there

Chokus

being no intermediate post. And as usual they provided him with nothing whatever in the way of rations, nor with money to buy them with for himself.

After leaving Chokus we travelled for some hours through a wide valley. The track wound along the mountainside, in and out, up and down, sometimes over barren ground with treacherous-looking banks of shale and out-croppings of dark red rock, sometimes through woods of oak-scrub and walnut. For several miles of the way the mountain above us rose in a series of enormous buttresses which suggested the bastions and battlements of some giant's castle. It was a curious freak of nature. I only retain a vague general memory of the scenery beyond this point, but I have recollections of struggling up steep and slippery banks and hanging on for dear life to the pack saddle, of traversing the edges of precipices, and of negotiating declines which threatened to throw me over the horse's head. And I remember the relief with which I descended at intervals from my uncomfortable perch, and also the struggles I had to regain it again. The Albanians had a way of taking a flying leap, landing face down on the top of the contraption, and then wriggling themselves into an upright position between the packs. But I was not so active as they, and in the absence of any rock or raised ground I always found mounting a trouble.

At midday, six and a half hours after our start, we reached a rude "khan"—a barn-like building into which the horses walked with the air of habitués. Here in the cool

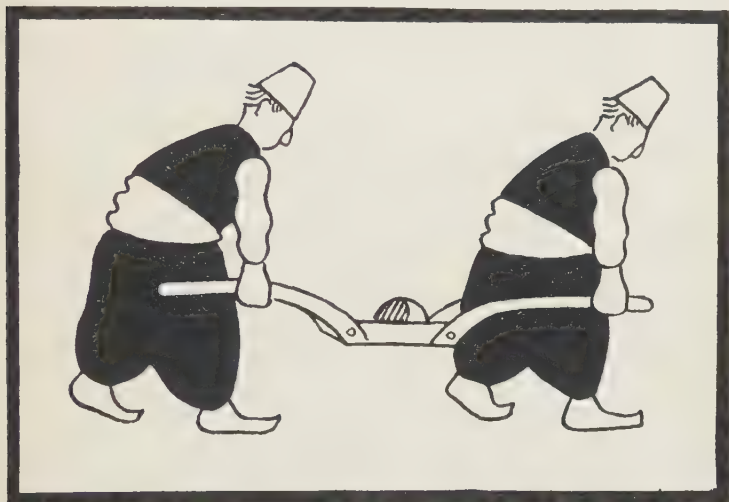
To the Land of the Eagle

half-light the poor beasts rested, while we sat on the floor and lunched on eggs, maize bread, and sour milk. A pack-train coming the other way had added to the number of the guests and the gathering was a large one. It was a dirty place, half stable, half inn, and full of ravenous chickens which walked right over us and tried to snatch the food as we put it into our mouths. I was by no means sorry to get outside and lie down for a rest, for I was very tired and very stiff and looking forward to another five or six hours trek with very mixed feelings. "*Deux jours à cheval*" sounds so simple and so easy. In the prefect's office it had suggested a pleasure-trip. It proved, however, to my companions as well as to myself, quite the reverse.

An hour was all the breathing space the driver would allow. Elbasan must be reached by nightfall. So at 1 o'clock we were once more en route, still skirting the same great valley high up on the slopes of the mountains. Presently the valley widened and at about four in the afternoon we found ourselves looking down on a plain which lay many hundreds of feet below. A steep zig-zag trail led to the bottom. The horses scrambled down as best they could, and so did we. It was a long and tiring effort, but at last, much shaken, we reached level ground. A peasant who was working in the garden of a cottage saw us, and brought out a great earthenware jar of water from which we all drank thankfully. I would have given a good deal to have been able to lie and rest for a while under a tree, but delay was out of the question. We had to push on.

Fording a River

The next incident that I remember was the fording of a river. The current was strong and the water was up to the horses' girths, but the sure-footed beasts struggled in a picturesque string to the opposite bank and jogged steadily onwards. I was sorry for the gendarme, who had to



"SLOWLY AND REVERENTLY AS IF IT HAD BEEN A CORPSE"

wade, but, wet as he was, he dried out thoroughly before he reached Elbasan. The going now was easy compared to the mountain trail we had been following all day. The path was level and much less stony. I sat on my saddle dazed with discomfort and swaying with fatigue, trying at intervals to find some position which would relieve my aching limbs and never finding it, and finally waiting in a sort of numb apathy for the journey's end.

To the Land of the Eagle

And so we slowly progressed until we arrived at a police post a few miles out of Elbasan. Here we were stopped by gendarmes, and everyone except myself, whom the magic paper of the prefect exempted, had to go and be interrogated. In the meantime I chose a shady spot under a willow and rested, thankful for the short respite. Two men were at work close by carting stones in a wooden stretcher for the repair of a bridge. With infinite labour and deliberation they would lift a small stone on to the carrier, straighten their backs, then spit on their hands and bear the stone away to the bridge as slowly and reverently as if it had been a corpse. Tired as I was, I could not help laughing. It was the most flagrant example of "ca' canny" I have ever seen. Some day, I suppose, the repair of that bridge will be accomplished—if Allah wills it.

Everything, however, comes to an end in time, whether it be the construction of an Albanian bridge or a journey by pack-horse from Podgradetz to Elbasan. At about 6.30 the driver pointed out some minarets which were visible on the horizon above the tree tops, and I knew that the long and tedious march was nearly over. A few minutes later we stopped at a roadside fountain to water the horses for the last time, and at seven we entered the town. We had been travelling continuously that day for thirteen and a half hours with only one short break midway. Such was my experience of a pack-train. It was an experience I had no desire to repeat.

My first duty on arrival was to go with the poor old gendarme, who was by this time very weary and footsore,



ELBASAN CYPRESSES

Good-night

to hand over my way-bill to the police. He had done eleven and a half hours' actual marching burdened with a rifle and a heavy belt of ammunition, and all the food he had had was some maize bread and sour milk with which I had provided him during the midday halt. I therefore felt that I owed him some compensation and offered him the small sum of 5 krone (about 2s.). At first, somewhat to my surprise, he refused it, but he eventually gave way to my insistence and with a hearty handshake we parted—the best of friends.

While I was at the gendarmerie my fellow travellers, the English-speaking Albanian and his young cousin, secured a three-bedded room over a general shop which seemed reasonably clean and comfortable, and here our baggage was brought. Declining their offer to show me round the town, I had a thorough sluice-down with the aid of a young fellow belonging to the shop, and retired to bed. Later on my room-mates returned with bread, onions, and yaghourt, and by the light of a candle we supped. My subsequent recollections are faint. I remember the elder of the two men taking off his boots with the remark "I guess my feet stinks like hell". I remember the younger man rolling up in his "rezai" with all his clothes on. I remember the elder man reaching out for the last remaining onion and proceeding to eat it. And I remember his final conversational effort—"My stomach she wants a onion—she wants a onion every day". And with that piece of gratuitous information ringing in my ears I must have fallen asleep, for I remember nothing more.

CHAPTER XI

Elbasan—At the Fez-maker's—Factories or No Factories—An Albanian Schoolboy—Antiques—The Bechtashi Monastery—The Strange Story of a Saint—A Remarkable Belief—The Giant Cypresses of Elbasan—The Inn—Osman the Art Critic—In the Restaurant—Concerning Patriotism.



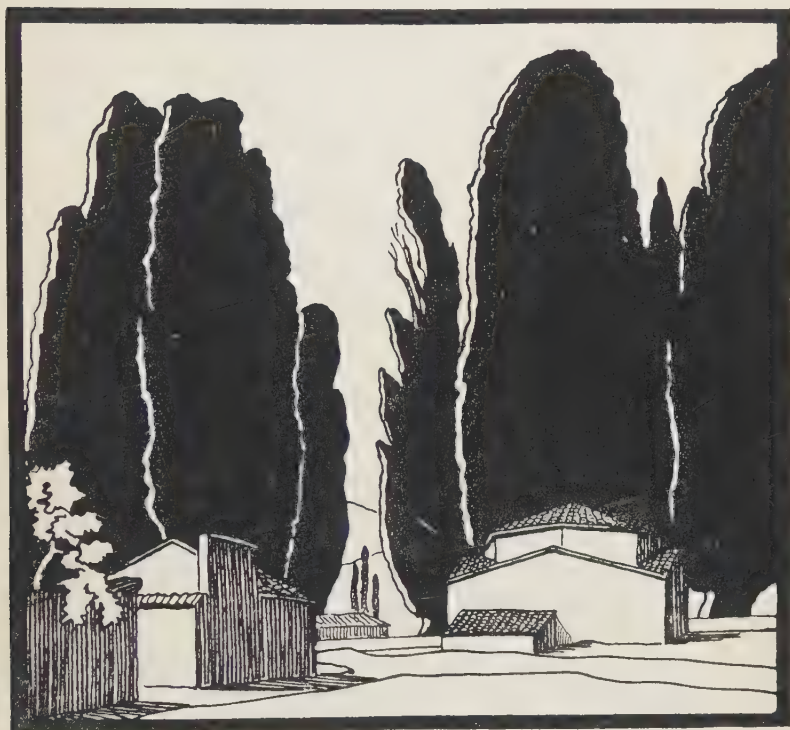
GIPSY WOMAN

ELBASAN, an ancient Moham-
medan city of 15,000 inhab-
itants, is a piece of Asia set
down in Europe. The streets
are narrow, and paved with the
customary irregular cobble-
stones. The shops, of one
storey only, appear to be saved
from entire collapse by props,
posts, and other temporary
supports. The heavily-tiled
roofs, which tumble about at
all sorts of angles, suggest a
rough sea petrified. The main

square boasts a plane tree of tremendous girth—a veritable
Methuselah of trees—in whose extensive shade sit
country-folk with their various produce for sale beside
them. Everyone who is anyone owns a shop, and the life
of the place centres in the bazaar. The itinerant coffee-
vendor, a man much in request, walks about all day with a

Elbasan

circular tray on which are set out half a dozen long-handled Turkish-coffee-pots, a few tiny cups, and a handful of glowing charcoal. As he goes he rattles a pair of tongs—the audible



THE GIANT CYPRESSES OF ELBASAN

sign of his trade. Elsewhere the ice-cream man with his bucket makes his own special appeal, crying his wares in a loud and raucous voice. Somebody is always bawling in

To the Land of the Eagle

the Elbasan streets. And there is always a noise of hammering. The blacksmiths are at work—hammering. The tinsmiths are at work—hammering. The silversmiths are at work—hammering. The carpenters and joiners are planing, sawing, or hammering. The cobblers are stitching and hammering. Wherever you go your ears are assailed by the sounds of toil—honest, pleasant sounds far removed from the noises of a modern mill or factory. As I listened I thought of the thousands of folk at home who have to spend hours every day merely watching or feeding a machine—nothing to interest them, no pride in their work, no thought in their minds save escape at the end of the day. How much better off are these workers of Elbasan! And yet the Albanian is always grumbling because he has no factories. To have factories is the summit of his ambition. Factories—and then the millennium! If only he had factories! Factories! Then everybody would have work, everybody would have money, everybody would be thoroughly happy. So, in his folly and blindness, he thinks.

One has only to travel in countries where everything is made by hand to regret the invention of machinery. Economists, no doubt, will argue that it is wrong to do so. Machinery, they will say, enables work to be done quicker and cheaper, gives the worker leisure to improve his mind and to enjoy life, provides the means of trading with other countries, and adds to the wealth of the nation. It may be so. But that does not alter the fact that hand-made goods are always better than similar goods which are turned out by

At the Fez-maker's

thousands to one pattern in a factory, nor that the making of them employs a much larger number of persons in proportion to the number of articles turned out, nor—most important of all—that the hand-worker enjoys a pleasure which the factory worker can seldom, if ever, enjoy—the pleasure of creation.

I was wandering one morning through the narrow streets of the Elbasan bazaar when I noticed a shop where fezzes were being made. The proprietors, seeing that I was interested, invited me in, gave me a stool to sit on, and sent out for the inevitable coffee. One man was kneading a hat into shape on a wooden block. Another was finishing off the surface of a fez with a razor. A boy was picking out wool into small fleeces (I do not know how otherwise to describe them) of the correct size and thickness to become fezzes later on. Evidently a regular routine was being followed. For my benefit a complete fez was made from the beginning while I watched the process. The boy first took two of the already prepared fleeces and spread them on a board in front of him. He then sprinkled water all over them from his mouth—a serviceable, if primitive, fountain—and pressed them under a frame. The fez-maker then took the two fleeces, further wetted the edges, and doubled them over. He was sitting behind a low bench, with water, soap, and the necessary tools within reach. With his hands he then worked on the fleeces, adding soap as required, until the wool began to felt and the fleeces to assume a conical form. I had no idea until that time that it was possible, merely by

To the Land of the Eagle

taking advantage of the felting properties of natural wool, to make anything so solid as the substance which resulted, nor had I realised before, that our own felt hats are made in a similar way, though I now presume that they are. Bit by bit the fez began to take shape. By holding it up to the light weak places were exposed. A little loose wool was added where needful and felted on with soap and "elbow grease" until the cap was of uniform thickness. Heavy pummelling with a wooden instrument completed this part of the manufacture, and the fez was placed on a wooden block and put in the sunshine to dry. Later on it would go to the man who wielded the razor and be trimmed to a smooth finish.

While I was in the shop a customer handed in his fez, which was no longer as clean as it had once been, and received a nice white one in exchange. This is the local custom and is analogous to the custom of the smart Londoner of Edwardian and Victorian times who always had two silk hats, one in wear, the other at the ironer's.

As we were unable to find any common means of communication, conversation languished until a young fellow came across the street from a shop opposite. He spoke English. After asking my business or profession—the customary first question—he put the equally familiar query, "What do you think of Albania?" To which I replied that I thought Albania a fine country, rich in natural resources and with great possibilities of development. The youth shook his head sadly. "Aye, yes", said he, "but it is so

Factories or No Factories

poor. We have no money, no work. We want factories. We want the English to help us to build factories." It was the same complaint, though couched in slightly different terms, as that of the peasant at Koritza—"This country no goddamned good! No money, no work, no nothin'!" I was getting used to it.

"But", I exclaimed, "what on earth do you want factories for? These hats, for example—suppose a company started a factory here to make fezzes, they would turn out in a week as many fezzes as these people make in a year. The fez-makers would be thrown out of work and the market would be flooded."

The young man waved a deprecating hand. "Yes, yes", he said. "But we should export the hats to other countries and the foreign trade would make us rich."

The same old story—getting rich! getting rich! getting rich! I laughed, and asked him to put the case to the fez-maker. The man made some short answer and went on with his work.

"What does he say?" I demanded.

"He says", was the reply, "'We want no factories here'."

That evening—a Saturday and a market day—I stood on the long bridge which spans the river to the south of the town watching the stream of men, women, and children, returning to their homes in the distant villages. One strapping girl carried on her head a wooden cradle within which a baby was firmly bound with long strips of webbing.

To the Land of the Eagle

Everybody carried something. Many of the older men were noticeable for their height and the vigour with which they strode along. Their features were strongly marked, their noses aquiline, and the custom of close-cropping the head made it difficult to realise at first glance how old they really were. Some of the women, too, had good features, though they were seldom upright or tall, years of labour in the fields having stunted their growth and bent their backs. The life of the Albanian peasant is, undeniably, a hard life ; but is it not, when all is said, healthier, happier, and more to be desired, than the sordid existence of thousands of workers in the dreary manufacturing towns of Great Britain and Western Europe ? I thought of the conversation in the fez-maker's shop, and saw Albania, in imagination, under the thrall of industrialism. Instead of white minarets pointing skywards—black chimneys belching smoke. Instead of the voice of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer—the screech of the steam siren calling them to work. In place of sturdy peasants striding home to their villages in plain and mountain—factory hands, pale and anæmic, pouring out of the factory gate. Instead of the distaff and the hand-loom—the spinning-mule and the power-loom, and women working all day in a heated atmosphere and a racket of machinery for the benefit of whom ? And again I wondered at the folly of people who could deliberately choose such a life, or grumble because of the lack of it.

The doctor at Podgradetz had given me an introduction

An Albanian Schoolboy

to the head of the Normal School at Elbasan, and on the first opportunity I called there. The school, a large building standing in its own grounds, accommodates a hundred boarders as well as a hundred day-scholars of ages from 14 to 18. It has a staff of ten professors, all of whom speak French and have been educated at various continental universities. The students gave me the impression of being bright and intelligent. One, whom I afterwards met in the town, fastened on to me and would not be dislodged. He knew a little English and was not going to let slip such an opportunity of acquiring some more. He spoke quite decently although he had only learned for a year. I wondered, supposing the position were reversed, if an English school-boy would become as proficient in Albanian in the time. Mr. Giovanni, the headmaster, was, like the Podgradetz doctor, optimistic about his country's future. He, too, had ideals, and it was very satisfactory to find a man of his stamp in charge of the education of the rising generation. Such men will be the making of Albania, for in the long run education on broad and sane lines will do more for the country than either "organising the gendarmerie" or granting concessions to foreign capitalists.

Mr. Giovanni, being occupied with his duties at the school, passed me on to a friend of his who spoke English, Mr. Lef Nossi, who showed me Elbasan and its environs and was as kind and helpful as anyone possibly could be. Here again was another man of the right stamp—widely read, travelled, and deeply interested in Albania, its past, present,

To the Land of the Eagle

and future. From him I got some illuminating sidelights on Albanian history and a good deal of information on the political situation. He lived in a delightful old Turkish house full of antique woodwork and panelling and carved doorways, and showed me many curiosities and objects of interest which he had collected there. Among these were a cinerary urn, axe-heads and swords of the bronze age, as well as numerous arrow-heads of the same period and later. A cigar-box contained a large number of ancient Greek, Roman, and other coins, thrown in anyhow and as yet unclassified. Old chain armour and medieval weapons hung upon the wall. But in the whole collection I saw no flint implements whatever—not even an arrow-head. This struck me as curious. In a shed in the town he had assembled the larger antiques, such as pieces of stonework and carving, broken statuary, and other relics of Greek, Roman, and Illyrian origin, and it looked as though Elbasan would repay research by the excavator and the antiquary.

Under Mr. Lef Nossi's guidance I took a walk one day through the gardens and fields to the north of the city. Here was every indication of a fruitful soil. Vegetables of all sorts flourished, including potatoes, greens, onions, cucumbers, beans, and a vegetable previously unknown to me called the *bamie*. Fruit grew in profusion—plums, mulberries, apricots, medlars, cherries, apples, pears and peaches ; also figs, of which there are no fewer than thirty varieties, and pomegranates whose beautiful scarlet flowers and fruit I now saw for the first time. In the fields



A BEKTASHI BABA

The Becktashi Monastery

grew wheat, oats, and other cereals, as well as maize, the staple food of the poorer classes. The slopes of the hills were covered with olives, and altogether the country round Elbasan seemed "a land flowing with milk and honey". Honey in the literal sense, however, is a neglected product, and is only gathered wild, though in a country like Albania, which is exceedingly rich in flowers, scientific bee-keeping ought to be a profitable adjunct to vegetable and fruit growing.

Excursions farther afield were made possible by the kindness of the prefect of Elbasan, Mr. Izet Dibra, who placed a Ford car at my disposal. One such excursion took me to a Becktashi, or dervish, monastery, and another to a Greek monastery, both visits proving of considerable interest. At the first we (for Mr. Nossi was with me) were received by a dignified old priest who was wearing the same kind of flowing white robes and tall white hat as the dervish I had met at Koritza. While we sat in a vine-covered arbour outside the entrance smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee he told us how the monastery had been attacked during the revolution of 1914 by adherents of the Suni sect. The revolution was that in which Prince William of Wied, the regent, was deposed; and the Sunis are a sect of Mohammedans who hate their fellow religionists the Becktashis with a hatred only possible to religious fanatics. Under cover of the revolution they not only burned down the monastery chapel, but also arrested the old "baba" (priest) who was entertaining us, and kept him in prison

To the Land of the Eagle

until the return of Essad Pasha to power some six months later.

At the Greek monastery, which we reached by a track through a stream-bed so rough that it threatened to reduce the car to matchwood and scrap-iron, I was told another interesting story. In a shrine in the monastery chapel lie the remains of a great Albanian hero named John of Scutari, who was killed when fighting against the Bulgars in the year 1015. These saintly relics are an object of great veneration and, like the remains of Spiridione at Corfu and many others elsewhere, are believed to possess miraculous powers, and are brought out and carried in procession at times of national stress and on certain very special occasions. Some few months before my visit, so I was told by the baba, the Serbian bishop of Ochrida came to the monastery and asked to see, and was shown, the holy relics. The bishop then departed, and shortly afterwards a service was held in Ochrida cathedral which purported to celebrate the return of the sainted remains of St. John to their true home—Serbia. The claim of the bishop to have brought back with him the saint's body was substantiated by the placing, with much pomp and ceremony, of some object in a shrine already prepared for its reception. What this object really was is a matter for conjecture, as the body of St. John still lies undisturbed in the coffin which I myself saw through an opening in the side of a tomb in the monastery chapel. If the story is true, what can have been the object of the bishop's deception? If on the other hand it is untrue,

The Strange Story of a Saint

why should the priest at Elbasan trouble to invent it? Mr. Lef Nossi, who evidently believed the story, ascribed a political significance to the action of the Serbian bishop.



WOMAN OF CHERMENICA

He seemed to think it was part of some sinister intrigue. But, while I know that the Serbs, like the Greeks and the Italians, are always scheming to gain power in Albania, I cannot see how the pretended stealing of an Albanian

To the Land of the Eagle

saint can further their political aims, and, to me, at all events, the matter still remains a mystery.

In addition to the belief in the powers of St. John of Scutari—a belief which has a religious background—the local people hold other beliefs, some of which date back to very remote times. The graves of the babas are accounted holy, and are usually covered with cloths put there by pious persons who need assistance. And at a certain spot in the masonry of the ancient city wall there is a window or aperture at which it is customary for women who are unable to nurse their babies to place offerings of bread. When the wall was originally built, many centuries ago, a woman was sacrificed by being enclosed alive in the masonry at this particular spot. The sacrifice, quite a usual one in those days when any constructional work of importance was begun, was intended to propitiate evil spirits who might interfere with the progress of the work. On this occasion an opening was left, so the story goes, through which the unhappy woman might suckle her baby, and it is on this account that the place is supposed to possess the power of stimulating the flow of natural milk in those who make offerings there.

The tourist, should he penetrate so far, will find much to interest him in Elbasan, especially on market day, when it is packed with country folk in an astonishing variety of costumes. The surroundings are delightful. There are several parks and open spaces of which the most remarkable is a small square to the south of the town surrounded by



IN THE SQUARE, ELBASAN

The Inn

cypresses. These cypresses are the biggest I have ever seen. I never imagined that such cypresses existed or could exist. Even the tall Douglas firs of British Columbia, which attain a height of 400 feet, did not impress me as much as did these giants with their masses of solid foliage and their gnarled and knotted trunks thirty feet in circumference. It is worth while making a special journey to Elbasan to see them. This row of towering trees, almost black, walling in the little square and flooding it with their dense shadow, made a deep impression upon me. I saw no finer sight in all Albania.

The hotel accommodation in Elbasan is about what one would expect. The little place at which I stayed consisted of a nondescript shop below, where rope, lemons, corn, sugar, maize, nails, crockery, and all sorts of odds and ends were on sale, and a floor above with a landing, a lavatory, and three rooms all crammed with beds. It was tolerably clean, and the folk who ran it—an old Mohammedan named Osman Arapi, a youth, and a small boy—did everything possible to supply the, to them, rather remarkable demands of an English guest. The room in which I lived was pleasant and well lit, and I always had it to myself during the daytime. At night the other beds were usually occupied, and I never knew whom my companions might be. They were always accommodating and agreeable, however, and I soon became used to the lack of privacy. The washing arrangements were crude, and consisted of a basin on a soap-box in the corridor, but elsewhere, if you were

To the Land of the Eagle

not over-particular, a shower bath, with the aid of a bucket, was possible.

As usual, the boy was the power behind the machine. He it was who made the beds, swept out the rooms, and supplied the milk, the coffee, the yaghourt, or whatever you might happen to want. He never took his clothes off (some day, I imagine, when he has grown to a certain size, he will burst out like a butterfly from its chrysalis and a new suit will become an imperative necessity), nor did the youth who sometimes shared his labours. The two of them slept together on the landing not only fully clad but beneath a pile of rugs and blankets, while I, in the bedroom next door, though wearing only pyjamas, could hardly bear the weight of the single rezai. But the Albanian is insensible to heat, and even in the height of summer continues to wear his heavy homespun clothing and a vast waistband wound many times around his stomach.

Osman, my host, took a fatherly interest in my proceedings. He often came into my room and stood watching me while I wrote on the typewriter or made a drawing. On these occasions he would roll a cigarette and present it to me wet from his tongue—a customary offering in this part of the world which, of course, you must not refuse. As an art critic he was more well-meaning than discriminating. One day, I remember, I happened to finish a picture when he was in the room and gave it to him to look at. He turned it upside down, held it at arm's length, and, with his head on one side in the manner of the real connoisseur, exclaimed,

In the Restaurant

“ Good ! Good ! Dobro ! Good ! ” Then he patted me kindly on the back. I could sometimes wish that all critics were as easily pleased.

With the exception of breakfast, which in mid-Albania is either a non-existent meal, or consists of a cup of Turkish coffee and nothing else, I got my food at a little restaurant in the bazaar. Here, as at the inn, my demands were wont to cause astonishment. They could never understand my liking for maize bread, which is despised by them as the food of the poor, and, unless I made a fuss, always provided me with the stodgy imitation of French bread which they considered more suitable for a person of my exalted status. And when I asked for yaghourt, as I frequently did, the cook felt, I think, much as the head waiter of the Carlton would if one of the diners were to send him out for a penn’orth of fish and chips. Otherwise the food was what one usually finds in such places—all kinds of curious odds and ends of meat, partly roasted and partly stewed, oily beans, stuffed cucumbers, pilaf of rice, and sometimes macaroni. Now and then there would be caramel pudding, smothered in honey and much too sweet. The restaurant was open to the street, and, as it consisted of one room only, both cooking and washing-up went on in full view of the diners. The various dishes simmered all day over a slow charcoal fire, and there was no difference between dinner at midday and supper at night. The best drink was bottled beer from Trieste at three krone (1s. 3d.) the bottle, the wine, like all Albanian wine, being poor stuff. I usually found it necessary

To the Land of the Eagle

to insist upon my tumbler being specially washed, and the table cloths were stained and crumpled and looked as though they had been used as bedclothes during the night ; but for all that it was possible to get quite a satisfactory meal.

I was dining here one day when a young Albanian came in and sat down opposite me and began to talk. He had been in America, he told me, and thought it a wonderful country—such a contrast to Albania. Here what could one do ? No money, no work, and—I knew it was coming—no factories ! He cast a disparaging eye round the little restaurant and out into the narrow street. Then with a gesture of disgust he took up his parable again.

“ A poor country . . . a miserable country . . .
a wretched country . . . *but the States—*”

I could stand it no longer. “ Look here ! ” I said, “ I have been all over America and probably know it a good deal better than you do. If I had to choose between the States and Albania it would be Albania for me every time.”

The fellow looked at me for a moment with intense astonishment ; then, thinking, no doubt, that I was raving mad—or as he would have expressed it in the idiom of the country he so much admired “ gone bughouse ”—he got up and left the restaurant.

What I said may not have been quite literally true, but I was tired of hearing young Albanians running down their country—a country which only needs work and organisation

Concerning Patriotism

to make it a prosperous one, and education and a spirit of tolerance to make it a happy one. The mouths of these grumblers must be stopped. I am no admirer of a blind patriotism which exalts its own country at the expense of all others (a form of patriotism, indeed, which is almost a crime), but a man who deliberately disparages his native land, especially to a foreigner, and shows no pride of race or love of country whatever, is, to my mind, a despicable creature.



WOMAN WITH CRADLE

CHAPTER XII

Two Kinds of Music—"There was a Young Man of Durazzo"—Rhythms—
The Band in the Park—Gipsy Dancing Girls—Ghouls in the Cemetery
—Twilight.



STONE DOG
ON CHURCH WALL

I FOUND two kinds of music in Albania—the modern imported article as performed by a brass band in front of the President's house at Tirana, and the true music of the country, which is now played and kept alive only by gipsies. The brass band music was of the usual popular order—American jazz (the players had been trained in the States), the Barcarolle from "The Tales of Hoffman", the Toreador's Song from "Carmen", extracts from "Faust", and so forth, decently played but uninspiring. The gipsy music, on the other hand, was extremely stimulating, and at the first hearing I became keen to learn, if possible, something about it. So while I was at Elbasan I mentioned my desire to Mr. Lef Nossi, and he at once arranged—through the police—for some gipsy girls to come to my inn and sing to me so that I might have an opportunity of hearing and transcribing some real Albanian tunes. Exactly why the

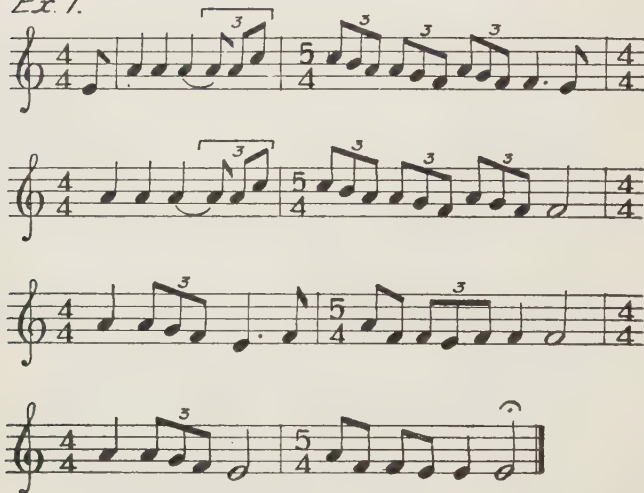
“There was a Young Man of Durazzo”

police should have had to be first approached I am not quite clear, but at all events a gendarme brought the girls and stayed in the room until the conclusion of their performance. Probably they were members of a certain profession, but as to that I did not enquire.

There were four of them in all—two girls of eighteen or so, and two older women. The girls wore the traditional dress of the dancer—a short dark-coloured bodice of velvet, and Turkish trousers of an amplitude that would make the widest Victorian crinoline look meagre. Yards and yards of material must have gone to the making of them, and yards more to the numberless frilly petticoats which showed through the thin stuff of which the trousers were made. Brightly-coloured handkerchiefs were bound round their heads, and long braids of black hair hung loose. Neat shoes, pointed and high-heeled, peeped out beneath the vast trousers. Gathering the ample folds of their garments around them they seated themselves on chairs, while the older women squatted on the floor. All had big tambourines. Then, according to the usual custom, cigarettes were handed round and tiny cups of black coffee, of which we all partook—the gipsies, the gendarme, Mr. Lef Nossi, my host Osman Arapi, and myself. These ceremonies concluded, the concert started. Swaying gently from side to side and beating a rhythm with their fingers on the tambourines, the girls began to sing. I got out paper and pencil and tried to write down the tune, and after a good many repetitions evolved the following approximate transcription :

To the Land of the Eagle

Ex. 1.

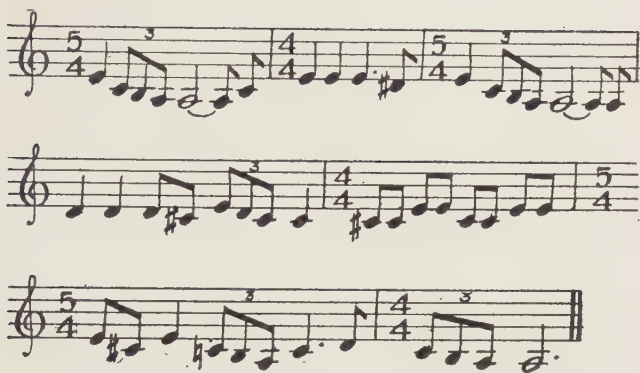


The song, I was told, concerned the adventures of a certain young man of Durazzo who was inveigled away by gipsy girls and robbed of all he possessed. I am afraid it was hardly a drawing-room song, and I refrained from asking for more details either of this or of a second song, of which the tune, as nearly as I could get it, was as follows :

Ex. 2.



Rhythms



Of a third tune, which was exceedingly intriguing and which I should have much liked to transcribe in its entirety, I could secure only the opening phrases, and these but very roughly ; after that it became too intricate and too elaborate for my powers of transcription.

“ Our music ”, said Mr. Lef Nossi, “ is very difficult ”— and I heartily agreed with him.

A musician reading these tunes may perhaps wonder wherein lay the difficulty. Any intelligent student could, he will think, write them down correctly at almost the first dictation. The difficulty arose from the fact that the tambourine rhythms which accompanied the songs were not only very elaborate but were strongly marked, and appeared to have little relation to the tune itself, which was smooth and had no outstanding accents or strong beats whatsoever.

To the Land of the Eagle

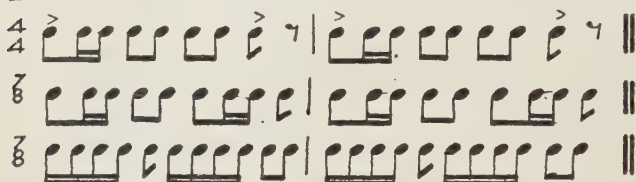
A favourite tambourine rhythm was the following :—

Ex. 3.



Other rhythms which I heard then and later were :—

Ex. 4.



The same evening, happening to stroll out to a little park on the eastern outskirts of the city, I met the gipsy girls again. They were part of a troupe of musicians which was performing there. The band consisted of a clarinet, a violin, and six big tambourines, and the players sat cross-legged on a bench under an acacia. There was a little refreshment hut or bar behind, and tables were set out on the grass. It was a very pleasant place to while away an hour or two.

The music, though not quite the same as the music I had heard in the morning (being, in fact, modern whereas the other was old), was equally interesting. The rhythms, as before, were complicated, and there were many unexpected progressions as well as curious scale passages which seemed to belong to no particular key. Tonality, as we know it, was practically non-existent, and its absence gave the music



DANCING GIRLS

Ghouls in the Cemetery

a character and charm impossible to describe. Many Western listeners would doubtless class it vaguely as "Oriental", and dismiss it as of no further significance, but there is a great deal more in it than such people may think.

The gipsy girls, as soon as they saw me, smiled broadly, and on the conclusion of the item in which they were engaged came across to my table for backshish. One of them I sketched, to the intense amusement of the others. Then they returned to their places on the bench and the music began again. Presently one rose and began to dance—a slow, swaying dance with body movements but with little foot work. She was soon joined by another. Both were wearing the short bodices and vast trousers I have already described. From a Mohammedan cemetery which adjoined the park a party of Moslem women in ghoul-like black draperies and veils watched the proceedings. I wondered what their thoughts were. Did they envy the gipsies? Or did they find compensation for the dullness of their own lives in a sense of virtue and moral superiority?

The cemetery was entirely overgrown with bracken, and only the occasional appearance above the greenery of a tombstone higher than its fellows indicated what the place really was. I thought of certain cemeteries of England and Western Europe with their serried rows of staring white headstones, their glass-covered imitation flowers, their monuments—so ugly and so pretentious—and I wished that they too, could be overgrown with bracken.

To the Land of the Eagle

Past the park and the cemetery ran the road by which we had reached Elbasan in the previous week. Now the evening traffic moved slowly along it ; herds of cows, bullocks



MOSLEM WOMEN

and water-buffaloes—the cowbells making mellow music ; solitary travellers on foot or mounted ; flocks of goats and sheep—an undulating living stream of white, black, grey, and dun ; gendarmes with rifles slung across their shoulders ;

Twilight

groups of peasants returning home from their toil in the fields ; donkeys so loaded with hay that only their twinkling hoofs were visible ; strings of weary pack-horses nearing their destination and rest for the night in the khans of Elbasan.

Meanwhile the band played as vigorously as ever, the girls danced and sang, the bar did a roaring trade, cars kept arriving with fresh customers, and from the adjacent cemetery the veiled Moslem women watched the scene in silence. But at length the sun sank behind the hilltops, and from the minarets of the city, softened by distance, came the call to evening prayer. I roused myself and paid my modest reckoning. Then, filled with the peace of the evening and the calm that enfolds remote Elbasan and all who dwell within her ancient walls, I strolled slowly homewards in the twilight.

CHAPTER XIII

The Indiarubber Ford—Rough Going—2d. a Mile—The two-bedded Room—At the Aerodrome—Albania from the Air—Scutari—Belts and Cloaks—The First Oboe—Tobacco Manufacture—Powers of the Prefect—High Albania—The Vendetta—The Schoolmaster's Crime.



JACK

THOSE people who are fond of cheap witticisms at the expense of the Ford car ought to travel by one from Elbasan to Durazzo. It would hardly be possible to test a car more severely, not on account of the gradients—for the road is more or less level—but on account of the surface of the trail itself. The Ford car in which I accomplished the journey seemed made of indiarubber. It was nothing unusual for the driver to force it head-on into ditches so deep and so narrow that the front wheels were climbing the opposite slope before the back

wheels had reached the bottom. By all natural laws the car should have been broken in two. But somehow

Rough Going

it survived. Fortunately, however, such obstacles were infrequent, for in many places a partly-finished metalled road made rapid progress possible. This road is evidence of the fact that the Government is alive to the necessity of grappling with the traffic problem and desirous of linking up all the principal towns by means of a lorry service. Even during my journey through the mountains between Podgradetz and Elbasan I saw men working here and there on bridges and on cuttings in the mountainside in readiness for the road which will some day carry the traffic between these two towns.

We left Elbasan soon after nine in the morning. Osman Arapi, the boy, and the youth, and also Mr. Lef Nossi, came to see me off. I have a vivid visual memory of the scene at the starting-point—a cobbled street with a tumble-down shop on the right full of rows of tin pots glittering in the sunshine, a yellow-walled house with a brown roof and bright blue window shutters on the left, ahead an old mosque with a rounded dome and an enormous cypress towering aloft into the azure sky.

As we crossed the plain, through olive groves, orchards, and fields of wheat and rye, the farther hills were misty, and the great three-peaked mountain near Berat, which stands up alone a giant among pigmies, was only just visible through the haze. Beyond were fields of oats already ripe and yellow, and maize—a later crop—still green. We stopped at a wayside fountain to quench our thirst and to change a tyre. On the hillside, where some olives cast a scanty shade,

To the Land of the Eagle

shepherds were tending their flocks. In the roadway a tiny foal, stifflegged as a nursery toy, gambolled near its sedate mother. A party of peasants in the blanket-like clothes and white fezzes of Albania stood chatting by the spring.

The tyre repairs accomplished, we resumed our way and presently passed through the villages of Bekini and Kavaja. At Kavaja it was market day and our car caused a flutter in the crowded streets—cattle, chickens, geese, children, pack-donkeys, and peasants, all scattering wildly to make way for us. When we came in sight of the promontory and the white and yellow houses of Durazzo the road came to an end on the beach. Nothing daunted, the driver pushed on. The little Ford responded nobly to this fresh demand, and, ploughing ahead axle-deep in loose sand, brought us safely into the town shortly before two o'clock. The journey therefore, including a stoppage for tyre repairs, took about four hours and a half. I calculated that the driver received altogether something less than 6½d. per mile for the trip. I paid 30 krone for my seat, which works out at a trifle more than 2d. per mile, and there were two other passengers who, being Albanians, would probably pay less than this rather than more. It is difficult to see how a profit can be obtained on this basis, especially when the heavy wear and tear due to the roughness of the road is taken into consideration.

I did not stay in Durazzo, but after an abortive call at the Legation—both the minister and the vice-consul being away—secured a seat in a car for Tirana where I arrived



GHEGS AT TIRANA

The Two-bedded Room

later in the afternoon. I had hoped to be able to find quarters at the Hotel Continental where I had been before, but owing to the return of the President from Durazzo, where he had been recently staying for reasons of health, the town was very full and neither the Continental nor the Internationale was able to accommodate me. I therefore tried a less pretentious hostelry, called the Kortcha, where, as soon as I said I was English, I was warmly welcomed by the proprietor and led to a room which contained two beds and some unmistakably British luggage. "Someone else to organise the gendarmerie" was my first thought as I opened my suitcase and began to unpack. Then, as I caught sight of some toilet accessories on the table, a misgiving crossed my mind and, recalling the proprietor, I asked him whom the present occupant might be.

With a face which expressed anticipation of my entire satisfaction with the proposed arrangement he replied: "Una signora Inglese, signore".

"Una signora?" I demanded.

"Si signore, una signora—una signora Inglese."

"Non possibile", I said, shaking my head and closing my suitcase.

The man's smile died away and his face fell as, with a shrug of the shoulders indicative of the utter incomprehensibility of the English, he took me upstairs and gave me other quarters. I left Tirana very early the next morning and had no opportunity of making my compatriot's acquaintance, so unless she happens to read these lines she will never know

To the Land of the Eagle

how near she came to finding a strange Englishman established in her bedroom.

After making my final arrangements at the Hotel Kortcha I went out into the town. A multi-coloured crowd of townsfolk and peasants thronged the stalls in the square by the big mosque, whose minaret, a graceful pillar of white, shone in the yellowing light of the setting sun. A row of sombre cypresses and a range of purple mountains formed the background. A short distance away, in a field, was a large black shed which looked like an aerodrome and I decided to investigate. An aerodrome it was, and in it were some German mechanics hard at work over the engine of an aeroplane. A second machine stood in the shed in readiness for a flight to Scutari on the next day. Now, although one quarter of the way through the twentieth century, I had never yet flown, and I felt that it was time I did so. I therefore made enquiries and, finding that the fare was the exceedingly reasonable one of one napoleon for the trip from Tirana to Scutari, I booked a seat on the spot.

All that evening, while visiting the American technical school which is doing such good work for Albania, while listening to the band which was playing in the square outside the President's house, while dining in unaccustomed luxury at the Hotel Continental, my coming adventure occupied my mind. By the rising generation an aeroplane is, doubtless, accepted as a matter of course just as is the motor-car. But to anyone who has seen from the beginning the evolution of both, the act of flight by human beings is still one of the

At the Aerodrome

greatest marvels of the age. I confess that I was thrilled at the prospect before me. I went to bed early and rose with the dawn.

The aeroplane service, which connects Scutari, Tirana, Valona, and Koritza, is run by the Aero-Lloyd Company. It does not pay as yet, though it may do so eventually, and in the meantime is subsidised, I understand, by the German government.

Having packed my suitcases as quietly as possible, in order not to disturb the other occupants of my room who were still fast asleep, I went out into the main part of the hotel and succeeded in arousing the proprietor and getting my bill. Then, with some difficulty, I found a porter to carry my baggage, and set out for the aerodrome. It was a heavenly morning—warm and sunny. Not a breath of wind was stirring. I could not have had more ideal conditions for my first flight. A clock in the town was striking six as we arrived, and soon afterwards the plane was run out of the shed and the engine was started. My two suitcases and typewriter were weighed and placed in the coupé and I had to settle a bill which came to more than the price of my own seat. The throttle was opened, a hurricane of wind from the roaring propellor flattened out the grass blades and made us cling to our hats, the pilot in leather coat and goggles climbed to his place. My fellow passenger and I took our seats in the coupé, and the door was shut. The plane began to move forward, there were a few light bumps, then our speed increased, and with a wide circular sweep we were off.

To the Land of the Eagle

As we rose I looked down and saw Tirana below me. The mountains to the north and east were hazy and indistinct, but southwards the plain was in brilliant sunlight, and every house, every tree, almost every furrow, was visible. I watched the shadow of the aeroplane pass rapidly across the fields, and thought how strange it was to be separated from one's own shadow by several thousand feet. The villages looked like toy villages. The peasants working in the fields dwindled to mere specks of white. At one point an old castle straggled over a hilltop—its walls and bastions marked out as though on a map. The promontory of Durazzo became visible with its line of white houses. Then the coast to the northwards and the little port of San Giovanni di Medua. I was enthralled by the view and by the smooth motion of the plane, which was as steady as an express train. The coupé protected us to a great extent from the noise of the engine, and conversation was just possible. My companion, a lady, was, like myself, flying for the first time. Rather to my surprise—for there did not seem to be any reason for it—she became paler and paler, and at last . . . but no matter! Albania is a sparsely inhabited country.

All too soon—for me, at all events—Scutari and the Lake came into view and we began to plane down. Up above, our great speed had not been evident, but as we neared the ground the rushing by of fields and hedges showed how fast we were really travelling. The end of the flight came quickly. A few bumps, and almost before I could realise it the plane was stationary and the journey over.

Scutari

It is seldom that realisation equals expectation, but the pleasure that I derived from that flight between Tirana and Scutari not only equalled but far exceeded my anticipations, and I am looking forward to the day when reduction



SHEEPS' HEADS

of fares will make flying a practicable possibility for all of us. It is the pleasantest mode of travelling I have ever experienced—or it seemed so on that calm summer morning

To the Land of the Eagle

—and its rapidity enabled me to accomplish in forty minutes a journey which had previously taken me six hours by car.

A remote Balkan country like Albania was the last place in which I expected to make my first flight, and I could not help thinking it remarkable that within a few days I should thus experience the two extremes of travel—the pack-horse and the aeroplane.

On this, my second visit to Scutari, I stayed at the Hotel Europa. From without it did not look attractive, as the larger part of it appeared to be either under repair or in course of demolition. But within I found it clean, and even—for an Albanian hotel—luxurious. I had a bedroom to myself, with a washstand, a wardrobe, and other articles of furniture to which I had for some time been a stranger. And, finally, I actually dared to sleep without socks on and to forego the elaborate barrage of insect powder without which I had found sleep impossible in the up-country inns.

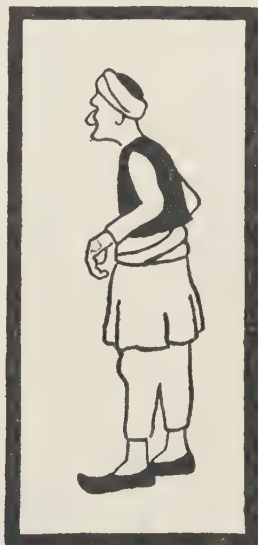
Until recently, when the government migrated to Tirana for safety, Scutari was the Albanian capital and an important diplomatic centre. All the foreign legations were here, and there was a good deal of gaiety. Now, however, it is a dead-alive place with no social amenities such as there were in the old days. Personally I found the old town, which, with the ancient citadel, is about a mile away from Scutari proper, by far the most interesting part. It has a bazaar thronged with peasants in the picturesque costumes of the district, among whom are always to be found some of the gipsy or

Belts and Cloaks

Rumanian women, with heavy black-striped and white-edged skirts and enormous silver-studded belts, whom I have previously described. I saw these belts being made. The foundation is leather, and into it are driven nails in so



THE FUSTANELLA (KILT) AS I
EXPECTED TO SEE IT—



—AND AS I SAW IT

close a pattern that little of the leather remains visible. The belts are eight or nine inches wide and have a big lock. Their weight may be imagined, and yet the women were wearing them, in addition to the heaviest possible clothing, in a temperature which had driven me to take refuge in a suit of tropical linen.

To the Land of the Eagle

I stopped one morning at a shop where an old man was busily embroidering a cloak. It was one of the great cloaks which are worn by the Scutari ladies, and the work was very intricate and fine. One of the completed cloaks—a voluminous garment of terrific weight—hung at the front of the shop. I asked the price. The embroidery was black on a scarlet ground and covered the whole cloak in a pattern of spirals. It must have taken him months to complete, yet all he asked for it was two napoleons (32s.), and I daresay, had I made him an offer, he would have accepted less. In order to show it off the better he put the cloak on and strutted up and down outside—an impromptu mannequin parade which much amused the onlookers. I fear he was disappointed when I went away without making a purchase, but if one bought all the beautiful and cheap things one saw when travelling one would have to charter a ship to bring them home.

One little purchase I did make, however, when wandering one day in the country outside Scutari. This was a small pipe on which a shepherd lad was playing a most fascinating modal tune. At first he refused to part with it, but his father, who came out from an adjacent cottage, settled the question by taking it away from him and thrusting it into my hand. The boy looked glum at this summary disposal of his property, but a handful of small coins consoled him, and before I left he was happily engaged in making another. The pipe had five double fingerholes—its two reed stems being side by side—and terminated in a bell-mouth made

Tobacco Manufacture

from a ram's horn. It was fastened together with beeswax into which tiny coloured beads had been driven to form a pattern. At the mouthpiece end were inserted two short lengths of straw cut in a peculiar manner, and it was the vibration of these straws which produced the pleasant, oboe-like sound ; though when I got back to the hotel and tried the instrument, much to my disappointment no sound whatever came. There is evidently a knack in playing it which I do not possess. Similar little pipes have been known in the Balkans for many centuries. They are, without doubt, the early ancestors of the reed instruments—clarinets, oboes, English horns and bassoons—of the modern orchestra.

The principal tobacco-growing districts of Albania are Elbasan and Scutari. The tobacco of Elbasan is usually considered the better, though the cigarettes of Scutari suited my personal taste and I preferred them to the Elbasan cigarettes. I think that the leaf was chosen with more care and that the blending was superior. At both places they are cheap, the price of a packet of twenty being half a krone (2½d.). Many of the local people, however, prefer to carry loose tobacco and roll their own. Pipe-smoking is rare, and the pipe-smoker has to have tobacco specially cut for him. Cigars are not available, the reason being that, although they could be made, nobody could afford to buy them. The crop at present grown is only sufficient to supply the home demand, and, with the exception of a small quantity to Zara on the Dalmatian coast, no tobacco is

To the Land of the Eagle

exported. I was surprised to hear this, as the tobacco is of good quality and ought to command a sale abroad.

One morning I was invited into his shop by a Scutari tobacconist to see the process of manufacture. Near the door sat two men and a boy rolling tobacco and filling paper cigarette tubes at an astonishing rate. At the back of the shop a third man was cutting the tobacco with the aid of a heavy knife and a U-shaped receptacle. This receptacle was lined with polished tin, and the knife was fastened so that it worked on a fulcrum across the opening. Having slightly oiled the tin lining the man put in tobacco leaves one on top of another until he had a wedge of tobacco some six inches through. Then he knelt upon it so that the pressure was sufficient to force the mass forward to the slight extent necessary for each stroke, and began to work the knife. It will be readily understood that the one essential to the success of the process was to keep the blade at razor sharpness, and this necessitated constant removal and much work with oilstones and hones and a considerable amount of hammering and adjustment. I stayed for a quarter of an hour drinking the coffee and smoking the cigarettes that my hospitable host provided, and then escaped with relief. Although the weather was hot the little shop was hermetically closed ; not a particle of air could get in anywhere and I marvelled how it was possible for five persons to exist—let alone work—in such an atmosphere.

At the Hotel Europa there were three British guests besides myself—a colonel, and a major and his wife. I

Powers of the Prefect

asked the two officers what they were doing there and received the reply I expected. I gathered, however, that their future was somewhat uncertain, since the Albanian Government was slow in carrying out promises in regard to pay, and even the money to cover sundry disbursements inevitable to the proper discharge of their duties was so far not forthcoming. In their company I dined one evening as the guest of the prefect of Scutari at, of all places, the Grand Hotel, and, to my intense surprise, the dinner was excellent in every way. That it was possible to galvanise the hotel staff into producing it was a convincing proof

of the special powers possessed by our host, and I mentally took off my hat to him. The prefect of Scutari was evidently no ordinary man. The position, however, apart from minor matters such as dinner-giving, is really a responsible one and calls for special qualifications, for Scutari abuts on the



DRAWING WATER

To the Land of the Eagle

wild and lawless country on the borders of Montenegro and to the prefect is allotted the difficult task of maintaining order there. This part of Albania, which is exceedingly mountainous and extends northwards to the Serbian border, is the part which is most often visited by travellers and most frequently described in books of travel. Indeed, it is a matter of complaint amongst Albanians that so many books are published which deal with this particular portion of the country—a portion by no means representative of the whole—and convey the impression that all Albania is similar to it. My original intention had been to cross the border from Kolašin, in Montenegro, and travel down through this mountainous country to Scutari, but I was dissuaded by the Governor of Cettinje, who declared that it would be very unwise to attempt such a journey on account of the danger of being attacked by brigands, and although the idea of being attacked by brigands—so romantic and such excellent “copy”—rather appealed to me, I was not anxious to share the fate of two Americans who had recently been killed there. Afterwards I regretted that I had been induced to change my plans, for I learned that the two Americans had accidentally walked into an ambush that was intended for somebody else and that I might have made the trip with safety.

Those who want to know about these highlands of Albania will find a vivid description of them in “High Albania” by Miss Durham, a book which was written a year or two before the war. At that time the blood-feud and the

The Vendetta

vendetta were the chief preoccupations of the mountain folk and murders and killings were of frequent occurrence. Men were liable to be shot at any moment, and often were shot, solely because their ancestors of several generations back had quarrelled over some trivial matter. Albanians claim to-day that the vendetta is a thing of the past, but I had no difficulty in ascertaining that the claim is not well founded ; vendetta crimes are still common, and even while I was in Scutari a murder " in revenge " was reported to the police.

The following story illustrates very well the sacrifices demanded by the code :—

A bitter blood feud had waged for several generations between two families in a remote mountain district. The head of one family died and the headship, and with it the duty of carrying on the vendetta, devolved upon another member of the family who was, as it happened, the village priest. One would have thought that his office would release him from the necessity of committing a murder. But it did not. He bided his time and shot his enemy dead. Then, as there was no other priest within many miles of the place, he officiated—difficult though it is to credit it—at the funeral of his victim.

Notwithstanding that a vendetta murder is committed in defence of the family honour it is, if the gendarmes succeed in tracing and arresting the perpetrator, invariably punished by hanging. The code of the mountaineers is so strict, however, that the penalty acts as no deterrent. A man who fails in his duty to kill an enemy of his house is outlawed

To the Land of the Eagle

from his own fireside, and he would rather face the gallows than the contempt of his family.

Even apart from the vendetta, the Albanian of this type is sometimes rather too ready to use his gun. Shortly before I was in Scutari a man was killed in a quarrel. It seems that the local schoolmaster had occasion to chastise one of the scholars. The boy's father was angry about it and called on the schoolmaster to remonstrate, taking a friend with him. In the ensuing dispute all lost their tempers and the friend unwisely "butted in." Whereupon the schoolmaster drew a revolver and shot the man dead.

The act which makes the carrying of firearms illegal is very necessary, and it is a pity that it cannot be enforced in this part of Albania as it has been elsewhere. But the inaccessibility of the mountain villages, and the lawlessness which makes the carrying of a weapon almost obligatory for self-protection, are at the moment insuperable difficulties. All that the gendarmes have been able to do so far is to insist that rifles shall be deposited at the police post outside Scutari before their owners enter the town. This explains what at first puzzled me—why the men in the streets of Scutari and in the Scutari bazaar were decorated with belts full of cartridges and yet no guns or rifles were in evidence.

CHAPTER XIV

I leave Albania—Montenegro Once More—Pelim Tea—A Hold-up—More Politics—Cettinje to Ragusa—Local Beauties—Barber's Shops—The Austrian Riviera—The Mystery in the Church—Its Explanation—Money's Worth.

SCUTARI is situated, according to the map, at the head of Scutari Lake, and I had therefore expected to find an esplanade or riva with houses facing the water. Actually the lake cannot be seen from the town, and there is no waterfront except at Old Scutari, where a narrow inlet accommodates a few fishing-boats and where there is a small wharf. The reason for this became apparent when I left by the lake steamer on my way home. The shore is merely swamp, and the open water is approached by a tortuous channel which winds for a considerable distance amongst waterweeds, alder scrub and tall rushes. The lake at the Scutari end is, in fact, very shallow, and for a mile or so out looks much more like grass than water.

The morning of my departure was cloudy and wet, and owing to frequent rainstorms which obscured the view I did not see the lake at its best. I was the only passenger and had the little cabin to myself. Here I settled down, and for lack of other occupation wrote up my journal which was, as usual, several days in arrear. Some three hours after our departure we anchored off the north-east shore of

To the Land of the Eagle

the lake where a channel through willows and reeds gave access to an invisible village. A boat-load of passengers—



A RELIC

probably from Podgoriča, whither a road runs through the marshes—emerged and rowed out to us. Amongst them was a Roman Catholic priest whose rather incongruous headgear was an old European cloth cap. Like myself he

Montenegro Once More

left the boat at Virpazar, which we reached an hour later, and I lunched at the Virpazar inn in his company, but, as I only knew a few words of Serbian and he did not seem to know any other language, our conversation was limited. Like all Montenegrins he did his best to show his friendliness, lingual limitations notwithstanding.

I had hoped to find a *posta* going to Cetinje, but my enquiries were met with " *nema posta* " (there is no *posta*) and I therefore contracted for a Ford car. The fare, equivalent to about 10s., was quite reasonable for a mountain run of several hours duration, though it was, of course, a good deal more than I should have paid for a seat in the *posta*.

At the pretty little village of Rjeka we stopped for coffee before beginning the stiff climb to Cetinje. The trees along the river bank were in full leaf ; the hillsides were gay with broom and sweet with traveller's joy ; wheat and rye were being cut, and the maize crop was well advanced. I had been away for two months and the lower slopes of the mountains were now much greener. At the higher altitudes, however, little change was noticeable, and the mountain tops were still the curious greyish-white that had struck me so much before. The *pelim* plant was in flower and covered the slopes with purple. This is the herb from which the local people make tea. It is quite a pleasant aromatic drink, and is said to be a cure for a cold. If I were a business man I should place *pelim* tea on the market, advertise it extensively, and hope to retire with a fortune in a few years. Any well-advertised cold cure is bound to find a ready sale

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in Great Britain, and since pelim is perfectly harmless—whatever its curative properties may be—its vendor could sing its praises from the hoardings in the modest and retiring language of the modern advertiser without any qualms of conscience.

When we arrived at Cettinje I went as before to the little Hotel Jadran where I was received with open arms. My return was celebrated by libations of ceremonial brandy—no refusal being accepted—and I was then installed in the best bedroom with clean sheets, clean towels, and hot water. A little later I called at the consulate. The door was opened by the excellent Vojn who, in his turn, was so excited at my unexpected reappearance that he did not wait to ask me inside but flew without ceremony to announce my arrival to his master. It was all very gratifying, and very typical of Montenegro.

I found the town agog on account of the hold-up by brigands of a prominent citizen on the previous evening. This man, it appears, was on his way to Belgrade with a letter from certain Cettinje Radicals (Radicals are supporters of the Union) to the Jugo-Slav prime minister, Pasitch. He was stopped somewhere on the Cettinje-Cattaro road, having unwisely started on the journey after the hour at which the gendarmerie patrols are withdrawn. The robbers, members, doubtless, of that band of stalwart, if misguided, patriots of whom I have spoken, who prefer outlawry to what they regard as Serbian domination, took from him not only several thousand dinars and some valuable rings, but, despite

More Politics

his protests, the precious letter also. It was said in the town that the brigands, before letting their victim go, chaffed him unmercifully, and, adding insult to injury, denounced him as a traitor. This detail, whether authentic or not, caused, I have no doubt, as much glee in the one political camp as it did indignation in the other. What happened in the end—whether Mr. Pasitch ever got his letter or a duplicate of it, whether the robbers were caught, or if the victim of the outrage ever received any compensation for his losses—I do not know. I left Cetinje before any further developments occurred.

The affair tended to confirm the opinion I had previously formed of the existence of a strong undercurrent of anti-Union feeling in the country, for the fact that the victim of the hold-up was a prominent Unionist and the carrier of important despatches would appear to be due to more than mere chance. Someone in the town must have passed the word along.

While not favouring one political side or the other it is impossible to deny that a small country like Montenegro ought to be better off as part of a Union of states than standing alone. And it is equally impossible not to sympathise with the nationalists, who feel that they are being treated as if they were a conquered race instead of a people who came into the Union of their own free will. Peace in the future depends upon the attitude and actions of the government. I heard of Montenegrin families being wiped out and their houses burned down by raiders from the

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border country between Montenegro and Albania. I was even shown in one case the blackened and ruined walls of such a homestead, and I was assured that the owners had brought the catastrophe upon themselves by their too outspoken anti-Union opinions, and that the perpetrators of the crime had never been punished. If this sort of thing is done, as was suggested by my informants, with the connivance of the authorities, it will be a long time before there is real peace or happiness in Montenegro.

The sands of the hourglass by which I had to measure the time of my absence from England were now rapidly running out. Much as I should have liked to linger in the clear whiteness of Cetinje, I was obliged to continue my homeward journey. Also there still remained Ragusa to be visited. For 400 dinars (about 30s.), I secured a seat in a car which happened to be going there, said good-bye, with great reluctance, to my friends at the consulate, packed my suitcases and departed.

I have already described the wonderful zig-zag road between Cetinje and Cattaro and the beautiful views to be had from it. Going back one misses the thrill of the sudden sight of the Montenegrin mountains, but the descent into Cattaro by the serpentine road is even more fascinating than the ascent. Beyond Cattaro the road runs for many miles along the water's edge to Castelnuovo, passing through hamlets and villages of great charm and beauty. Here it branches inland for awhile, but comes out again to the sea and ends with a very lovely run into Ragusa.

Cettinje to Ragusa

We stopped at a café in Castlenuovo and I renewed acquaintance with the Russian who had obtained my custom on the boat on the way out. But this time I was forewarned, and although he tried me in turn with papers, postcards, books of local photographs, and finally with an ikon which he had himself decorated with gold leaf and tinsel and a pattern of shells, his persistence overreached itself and he failed to sell me anything.

Ragusa, the most popular seaside resort in Dalmatia, is singularly unspoiled, and has none of that particular type of vulgarity—difficult to explain, but vulgarity none the less—which is associated with almost every fashionable watering-place. The old portion of the town is contained within the walls of a great castle or fortification which straggles irregularly inland from the rocky sea-front. It is broken at intervals by massive bastions and towers, with curves, sudden angles, outcroppings of greenery, old sculptures in half-relief, with battlements ruined and crumbling, and with battlements still as solid as when they were first built. At every point there is a new aspect, a fresh view, something to charm and delight the eye—whether of the castle ramparts, the town, or the blue Adriatic and its islands. The old town is Venetian, and the streets are of the same type as those at Cattaro, Spalato and other Dalmatian towns—stone-flagged and for the most part only a few feet in width. There are several churches and two monasteries, one Dominican and the other Franciscan—both with beautiful cloisters. There is a palazzo built in the Venetian style, and a duomo, or

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cathedral. A queer old Turkish fountain stands near the entrance gateway, and amid the network of narrow streets is a market-place whither come the gaily dressed peasants of Herzegovina to sell their fruit, their vegetables, their cheese, their poultry, and their eggs. And, finally, every other shop is a barber's. I have never before seen so many hair-cutting establishments in such a small space.

Every evening at about six o'clock Ragusa turns out for its daily promenade, and the Stradona—the main street of the old town—soon becomes crowded with citizens. Up and down they walk, chattering, joking, laughing, and gossiping, until they are tired, when they pass out through the great gateway and sit in the square outside drinking coffee and listening to the band. All the girls—the pretty girls for whom Ragusa is famed—are bobbed, or bingled, or shingled, and hence, I suppose, the need for the barbers' shops. In comparison with the veiled Moslems and the heavily-clad peasant women of Albania to whom I had been accustomed for the previous two months, the bare-headed Ragusan girls, in their light summer frocks, with low necks, bare arms, and short skirts, seemed hardly clothed at all. I was sensible of a distinct shock. They were, however, undeniably smart and such clothes as they wore they wore with an air.

There are no concert parties, no pierrots, and, as far as I know, no cinemas or theatres. But there is bathing and boating, and there are many beautiful walks in the surrounding country, and, for those who wish to go farther afield, many delightful trips by motor. One of these is to Cetinje

The Austrian Riviera

and back via Cattaro—fare 350 dinars—and nowhere in the world as far as I am aware, is such a wonderful drive to be had for this sum or its equivalent. No visitor to Ragusa should miss it.

The principal hotel in Ragusa is the Imperial, but I stayed, in preference, at the Hotel Petka at Gravosa, the small town which is connected with Ragusa by tram and at which most of the steamers stop. As the journey between the two places only takes a few minutes, one can just as conveniently stay there as in Ragusa itself, and it is more handy for the boat. The *en pension* tariff was about 10s. a day—an amount which, moderate though it was, seemed high after the low prices to which I had become used. The common language, other than Serbian, is German, as Ragusa before the war was the centre of what was then known as the Austrian Riviera. Even to-day the visitors are, for the most part, German or Austrian. The mental outlook of the inhabitants seems, however, very little affected by contact with the outside world, and, judging from an incident which I am about to relate, is still medieval rather than otherwise.

As I was walking one day in the Stradona, the clean-looking, stone-flagged main street of the old town, I remarked a certain excitement at the entrance to the Franciscan church. People were going in and out by the open door in much larger numbers than usual. My curiosity was aroused and I entered. Within the church, before an altar brilliantly lit with candles, stood, or knelt, a crowd of people. They were staring at something, but I could not make out what it

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was. One man had even provided himself with a pair of opera glasses and was gazing steadily through these. Above the altar was a very ordinary figure of the Virgin flanked on either side by pictures of saints. I could not see anything remarkable about the figure or about the pictures. The pictures, old and mellow in tone, were just such as are found in Italian churches. The wooden Madonna, painted a crude blue, was quite commonplace and usual also.

I waited, hoping that the mystery would explain itself. The crowd, lessened at one moment by people leaving, but augmented the next by new arrivals, merely stared. The man with the opera glasses readjusted the focus and continued to gaze as before. Save for soft footfalls and an occasional furtive whisper there was silence. Nothing happened.

At last I could stand it no longer, and, as far as ever from a solution, I left the church.

That evening I got into conversation with a man at a café who told me in all seriousness the following story. A day or two previously some children went to the Franciscan fathers and asserted that they had seen the figure of the Virgin move its eyes. The fathers, at first incredulous, were at length induced by the children's insistence to go into the church and investigate for themselves. Nothing immediately occurred and it was believed that the children had either been deceived or had invented the story. Then, however, it was remembered that an identical miracle was said to have taken place some years before, and a watch

Money's Worth

was set, with the result that the children's tale was verified. The news quickly spread through the town, and since then the crowd, as I had seen for myself, had been standing before the altar in the hope of a renewal of the phenomenon. Some people declared that they saw it, others saw nothing, but one and all were in a state of religious awe and went in daily fear of a repetition of the earthquake which was said to have accompanied the miracle on its previous occurrence.

It was now the end of June and I was due back in London. I went on board a Lloyd-Triestino boat and reached Trieste twenty-six hours later. Thence I travelled through to England in the ordinary way, the whole journey from Ragusa to London taking three days. It might be done quicker by the Orient express provided that the boat connection happened to fit, but in any event it is not a long journey. Including fares both ways, hotel bills, cost of local travelling, drinks, tobacco, stamps, sundry small purchases, and all out-of-pocket expenses, I found that I had only spent £60 on the three month's trip. I felt that I had had my money's worth.

In case any of my readers should feel inclined to follow in my footsteps and visit this delightful part of Europe for themselves I may say that from the beginning of March to the end of June ordinary summer clothes such as are worn in England are all that will be found necessary. There is no need to fear mosquitoes or malaria during this period, but a supply of insecticide is advisable in case bugs should be found in some of the up-country inn bedrooms—though

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that would not be until June, when the weather begins to get warm. The best insect powder, incidentally, can be bought on the spot, Montenegro being the place of its manufacture. The kind of accommodation to be found in the remoter districts has been sufficiently indicated by my descriptions, and will not appeal to the de luxe tourist. Instead of venturing inland he had better stay on the boat or remain at such civilised places as Ragusa or Corfu. Anyone, however, who is prepared to take the country as he finds it and to face a few minor discomforts will find himself welcomed and will be able to travel anywhere in perfect safety, for the inhabitants are friendly to the British, and even the brigands—unless by accident!—will never shoot an Englishman.

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